

THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 54.

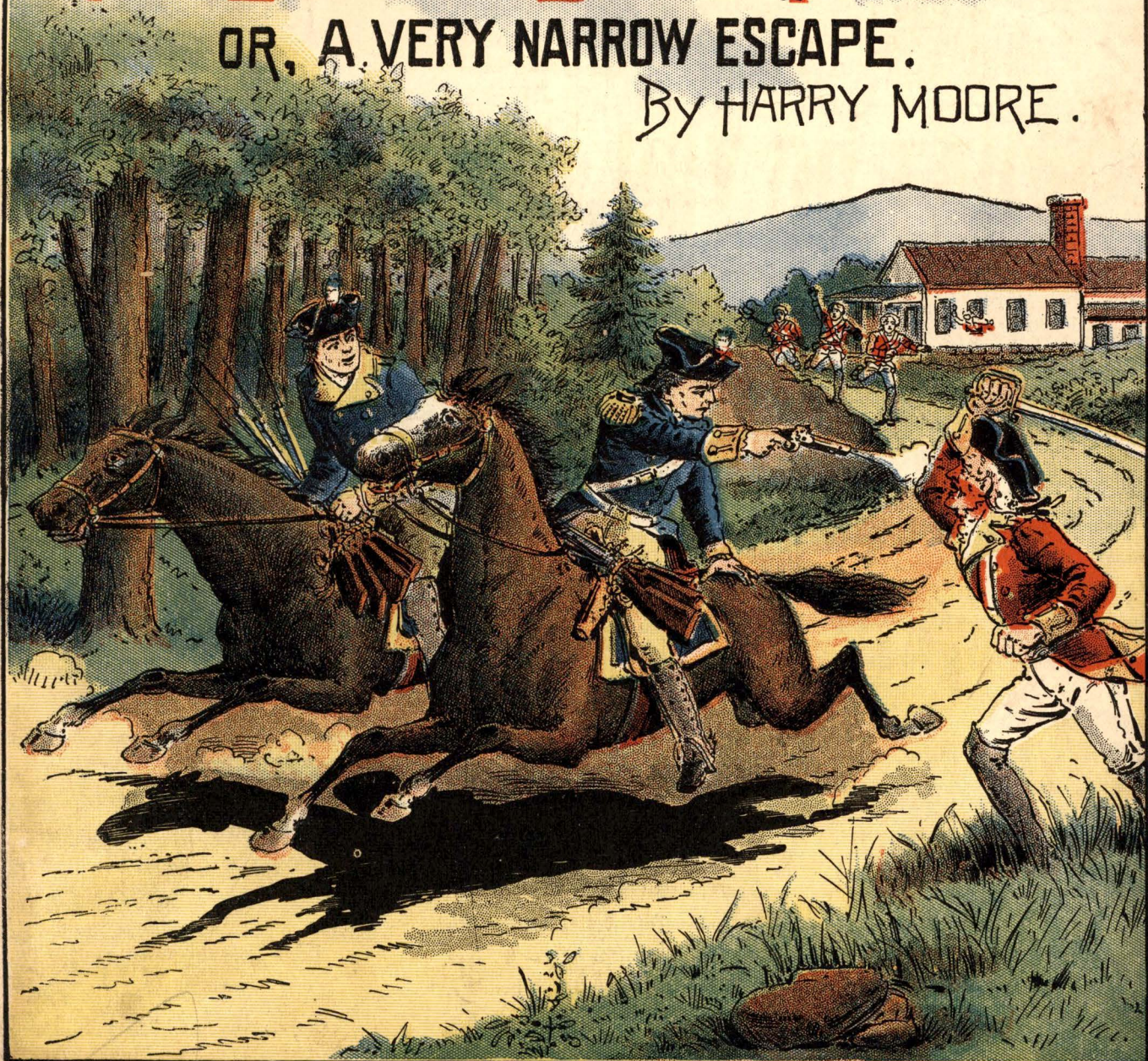
NEW YORK, JANUARY 10, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' FLIGHT;

OR, A VERY NARROW ESCAPE.

By HARRY MOORE.



With the arms tied on the saddles, Dick and Bob dashed down the road. A redcoat darted at Dick, sword in hand, but the youth stopped him with a pistol-ball.

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CHAPTER I.

A BAD NIGHT.

"Phew! this is about the worst night I have seen this winter! Jove, but that snow is so thick it might be cut with a knife, and it whirls and swirls around a fellow's head so that it is next to impossible to see where one is going. I don't like it; and I wish I hadn't started out to-night, after all."

A horseman was riding along a road in the eastern part of the State of Pennsylvania.

It was about nine o'clock at night, in the month of February, in the year 1778.

It was a terrible night, too. A fearful snowstorm was raging. The wind whistled, causing the snow to whirl and swirl at such a rate that at times it seemed to the lone rider as if a white wall stood across the road in front of him.

The horse had great difficulty in making his way along. He sank to his knees at every step, and with head down and ears drooped to keep the snow out, he moved onward, slowly and stumblingly.

It was a night when one might well wish to be indoors, before a blazing fire, and, as we have seen, the lone rider wished he was not out in the storm.

But he could not help himself, now, and he rode onward, urging his horse by occasional words of encouragement.

Onward the horseman rode, for half an hour, and it is safe to say that in that time he did not traverse a distance of more than a mile.

"Jove! this gets worse, if anything, instead of better," murmured the rider; "I wonder how it will turn out? If I don't find shelter somewhere, pretty soon, I fear I shall get lost; and to get lost to-night, and be forced to remain out in this storm, would certainly result in the death of myself and my horse. I must keep my eyes open for some place to stop for the night."

To keep one's eyes open on such a night as this, however, was no easy task, and the rider was forced to acknowledge to himself that if he found a place to stop it would be more by accident than aught else.

But he was not to spend the night exposed to the fury of the snowstorm. His horse suddenly uttered a low whinny, expressive of pleasure.

"What is it, old fellow?" the horseman asked. He was familiar enough with the ways of horses to understand that the animal had made a discovery of some kind.

Of course, the rider got no reply, but he noted that the horse had accelerated its pace and was proceeding at a faster walk.

"That means something," the horseman said to himself; "I believe that shelter is near at hand."

He was right; for a few moments later the horse turned sharp to the right and moved even faster. At the same instant the rider saw a light, which was evidently shining through the window of a house.

Soon the outlines of the house itself came into view, and right in front, too, for it was impossible to see it till close at hand on account of the terrible snowfall.

It was a welcome realization to the lone rider, the fact that he was where he would find shelter from the terrible storm, and he rode right up to the door, and, without dismounting, knocked lustily.

There were steps within, and the next moment a rattling sound proclaimed that the bar was being taken down.

Then the door opened and revealed a portly, red-faced man of perhaps fifty years of age. Just behind him stood a woman, evidently his wife, and a beautiful girl of perhaps seventeen years, and a boy of twelve, these being the son and daughter of the two, without a doubt. All stared at the horseman in open-mouthed amazement, as well they might, for the soft snow had clung to the clothing of the horseman till he looked to be a giant in size, while the horse loomed up to almost the stature of a small-sized elephant.

"Jehosaphat! who are you, and what are you doing abroad on a night like this?" cried the man.

"Well, I declare to goodness!" gasped the woman.

The girl and boy remained silent, but they continued to stare.

"How do you do?" greeted the youth, pleasantly. "Would you be so kind as to permit me to remain here until morning? I am a traveler and on my way to Phila-

delphia, but I fear that if I try to go on I shall get lost and freeze to death."

"Oh, yes, you are welcome to stay," was the prompt reply; "it will never be said of Martin Slavins that he refused hospitality to any one, in any kind of weather, and I would not refuse shelter to a dog on such a night as this."

"No, indeed!" echoed his wife. "You are welcome to stay."

"Thank you," was the reply; "and now if you will tell me where the stable is I will take the horse there and look after him and will then come to the house."

"Ride right around the house and straight back a distance of fifty yards," directed the man; "you will find the stable, then, and there is plenty of hay and corn right at hand. I will place a light in the back kitchen window to guide you to the house when you have finished, and will be there to open the door."

"Thank you," said the horseman, and he rode around the corner of the house and straight back as he had been directed.

He soon reached the stable, and, leaping down, opened the door and led the horse inside.

It was such a pleasant contrast in the stable from what it was outside that it seemed a delightful change to both the traveler and the horse.

"Jove! I could spend the night very comfortable in the haymow, here," remarked the horse's master, and doubtless if the horse could have spoken he would have expressed considerable satisfaction with the situation.

The bridle and saddle were quickly removed, and the horse was tied by a halter strap, after which the traveler placed corn in the trough and hay in the manger, and then giving the animal a pat on the neck, left the stable, closed the door and made his way toward the light which he saw shining through a window, straight ahead.

It was very hard work, indeed, getting through the snow, which was three feet deep everywhere, and in one place, where it was drifted, was five feet if an inch. It was very soft and yielding, too, and the traveler was one great mass of snow when he reached the kitchen door and stumbled into the house.

The woman of the house was bustling around, and the stranger saw that she was getting something for him to eat.

"Take off your overcoat and then I'll brush you off with the broom," said the man, heartily; "then we will go into the sitting-room where there is a roaring fire, and as soon as you are warm you can come out here and eat and drink something; Martha is getting you up a bite."

The overcoat was quickly removed and then the farmer

brushed the snow off the stranger's trousers and boots, after which they went into the sitting-room and took a seat before the great fire-place, in which was a roaring fire, there being almost a cord of wood piled up therein.

The girl and boy were there, and they looked at the stranger with interest. They were surprised—as was Martin Slavins, as well—to note that their visitor was a youth of not more than nineteen years at the outside.

The youth was a well-built, athletic-looking fellow, with a handsome, bronzed face, a firm chin, keen, blue-gray eyes, and long, silken hair. He was, indeed, one who would have attracted attention almost anywhere; certainly he riveted the attention of the little party in Martin Slavins' sitting-room.

Mr. Slavins himself was greatly impressed with the youth's appearance, as was also twelve-year-old Tom; and as for Lucy—well, she thought to herself that the young stranger was fully as good-looking as George Saunders.

And while the three were looking at the young stranger, he was looking at them. He had already sized the man up, and his wife as well, and decided that they were good, honest people, and a glance at the boy showed he was a bright young fellow; the girl required more extensive study.

She was, the youth decided, one of the sweetest, prettiest girls he had ever seen. She had blue eyes and golden hair, and a complexion that was perfect; her features were regular, her form perfect. The traveler decided that if all the girls in Pennsylvania were as sweet and pretty as was this one he would like to live in Pennsylvania.

The head of the house, after they had become seated and the guest had had time to become partially warmed, looked at the youth and said, inquiringly:

"I don't believe I remember what you said your name was?"

"I didn't say," was the quiet reply; "however, I will do so now. My name is Henry Jones."

"Henry Jones, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, you don't live anywhere around here?"

The youth shook his head.

"No," he replied; "I live in Philadelphia."

"Ah, in Philadelphia, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I have been back in the interior a ways, and am on my way back home."

"Well, you picked on a bad time for the trip."

"Yes, that is a fact. I had no idea we would have such a storm, or I should have waited a few days."

"Well, you are welcome to stay here till the roads become passable."

"Thank you, sir."

Henry Jones looked at the girl and thought it would be pleasant to remain a few days, and had it not been that he was a youth who had important business to transact, he might have wished it would keep on snowing till it was ten feet deep on a level.

The boy, Tom, who had taken an instantaneous liking to the stranger youth, hoped he would have to remain two or three days; the girl—but, there, it wouldn't be fair to tell what she was thinking.

Just then Mrs. Slavins came to the connecting doorway and called out that the stranger's supper was ready.

"Go on in and eat your supper, Mr. Jones," said the farmer; "you will feel better after you have done so."

The youth said he thought so himself, and made his way into the kitchen and seated himself at the table.

The woman waited on him and kept telling him to "eat hearty," which was something the youth was only too willing to do. He was hungry, and he ate enough to satisfy the woman. He bragged on the cooking, too, in a way that quite won Mrs. Slavins' heart.

"What a nice young man he is!" she said to herself when the youth had finished and returned to his place before the fire in the sitting-room.

The girl went into the kitchen and helped her mother wash and dry the dishes, and then both came into the sitting-room and took seats by the fire.

"This is a terrible night for Washington's men in the old cabins up at Valley Forge," remarked Mr. Slavins, with a shake of the head.

"Yes, indeed!" agreed the youth. "If everything I hear is true, or only one-fourth of it, they must suffer terribly on a night like this."

"I guess it is all true," said Mrs. Slavins, shaking her head; "and although I do not think they are in the right, in this cruel uprising against the good King George, yet I cannot help feeling sorry for them."

"So these people are Tories, then!" said the young stranger to himself; "I am glad to know which way their sympathies extend, and will know how to conduct myself—though I am very sorry to find that they are loyalists. It would have been so much more pleasant had it turned out that they were patriots."

"The king's soldiers are comfortable, at any rate," said the girl, and the youth thought he detected an undercurrent of feeling in the tone in which the words were spoken—a tone of anger against, and contempt for the British. He looked at the girl, closely and searchingly.

"Can it be that she is a patriot?" he asked himself. "It certainly would seem so."

Then up spoke Master Tom Slavins. "I wish it was the redcoats who were in Valley Forge and the patriot soldiers who were in Philadelphia," he said, with considerable feeling.

"Tom!" exclaimed the boy's mother, in a tone of surprise and reproof commingled.

"Why, you young rascal, what do you mean!" cried Mr. Slavins, glaring at the boy, angrily. "Can it be possible that I have a rebel right here in my own family?"

"I don't care," said Master Tom, sturdily, "I don't think King George has any right to send his soldiers over here to fight our people!"

"Good for the boy!" exclaimed the young traveler to himself. "There is the true American spirit, for you!"

The youth, who was a close observer, saw that Lucy had her hand on the back of Tom's chair, and he could tell by the movement of the pretty, white wrist that the girl was patting Tom on the back.

"She is a patriot, sure enough!" Henry Jones said to himself.

This knowledge surprised him. He could not understand why it was that the girl and boy should be patriots, when their parents were loyalists. He was to learn how it was that this was so, later on, however.

"Tom!" cried the boy's father and mother, in unison. "Why, what has come over you?"

"I never heard you say anything like that before!" added Mr. Slavins.

What more might have been said at that time can only be conjectured. Doubtless Master Tom would have received a thrashing and been sent to bed, but an interruption came just at this moment and the attention of his parents was attracted elsewhere.

There came a loud knock on the door, followed by the words:

"Open the door! Let me in; I'm nearly frozen!"

CHAPTER II.

MORE VISITORS.

"It's George!" cried Lucy, an eager light leaping into her eyes as she sprang to her feet as if to go to the door. Then she hesitated, gave a quick glance toward the young traveler and blushed in a manner which made her look more pretty than ever, so Henry Jones thought.

Mr. Slavins got up and walked toward the door.

"That did sound like George's voice," he said; "I wonder what can bring him over on such a night as this?"

The farmer had reached the door by this time, and he quickly unbarred it and pulled it open.

What looked like an animated snow man walked into the room.

"Good evening, all!" said a pleasant, cheery voice. "I'm glad to see you. Just wait till I go out in the kitchen and get rid of the snow."

Mr. Slavins closed the door and hastened into the kitchen to which place the newcomer had preceded him, and a few minutes later he returned, accompanied by said newcomer.

Relieved of his huge overcoat, and the extra coating of snow, the visitor could be seen to some advantage, and Henry Jones saw that "George" was a handsome young fellow of twenty or twenty-one years of age.

It did not take the youth long to guess at the relations of the newcomer toward this family; the blushing face of Lucy was better than a signboard. "George" was her lover.

"A fine fellow he is, too, if I'm any judge," was the comment which Henry Jones made to himself; "and a mighty lucky fellow, too! I wonder if he is a Tory?"

Then a thought struck the young stranger. He believed he could guess where Lucy and Tom had imbibed their patriotic ideas. This young fellow was a patriot, he would have wagered.

"George" was walking rapidly across the room, with his hands outstretched toward Lucy, an eager look on his face, when she took a quick step back, and, motioning toward where the youth sat, said:

"George, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Jones; Mr. Jones, this is Mr. Saunders."

Strange as it may seem, the young man had not until this moment noted the presence of a stranger. Doubtless he had had only eyes for the beautiful face of Lucy. Now, however, he turned, with a start, and faced the stranger youth. He started slightly when he had given a look into the other's face, and a frown came over his own face. Perhaps he did not like to see such a handsome young fellow there, where he could talk to Lucy Slavins, but if such a thought came to him it was doubtless only for an instant, for his face quickly cleared and with a smile he stepped forward and gave the other his hand.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Jones," he said, cordially.

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Saunders," replied the other, and there was a sincere ring to the tone.

Then George Saunders shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Slavins, and with Tom and Lucy, and Henry Jones noticed that the young man held the girl's hand longer than he had that of either of the others.

"And I don't blame him!" said Jones to himself.

"And now, what brought you out in this storm, George?" asked Martin Slavins, when George had seated himself, he having taken great care to secure a seat beside Lucy.

Henry Jones could hardly keep from smiling. "It would look to a man up a tree as if that is an entirely unnecessary question," he said to himself. "One can see, with half an eye, what brought George over here."

The young fellow flushed, slightly, and said:

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Slavins: Grandmother is bothered with rheumatism worse than usual, to-night, and she was suffering so that I made up my mind to come over and get some of those herbs like you gave me once before."

Mrs. Slavins leaped to her feet at once.

"Oh, yes; I'll go and get them right away, George," she said. "I am sorry for your grandmother, and you shall have the herbs in a jiffy; I——"

"Oh, don't hurry yourself, Mrs. Slavins," said George, hastily; "grandmother isn't suffering so very—that is—er—I don't think she is."

Again Henry Jones laughed to himself.

"This is quite an interesting affair," he said to himself; "it is a regular little drama in real life."

If Mr. or Mrs. Slavins noticed the apparent inconsistency of George's statements, they gave no sign.

"Never mind, I'll get the herbs, anyhow, George, and place them on the mantel where they will be handy so that you can get them when you do get ready to go," said Mrs. Slavins, and she bustled off into the kitchen.

George was evidently somewhat disconcerted, and he cast a suspicious and half-defiant look at Henry Jones, as much as to say, "Well, it isn't any of your business if I did come over here to see Lucy."

Henry Jones was looking straight into the fire, however, and there was no trace of a smile on his face—though he really was laughing to himself—and George was reassured and again turned his attention to Lucy.

Presently Mrs. Slavins came back into the sitting-room. She carried a large bunch of herbs which she placed on the mantel, with the remark:

"There, George, there are the herbs and I am sure they will be good for your grandmother; at any rate, I hope so."

They are to be brewed like tea, you know; but your grandmother knows how to fix it."

"Thank you, Mrs. Slavins," said George. "I must be going back as soon as I get warm."

Had this taken place one hundred and twenty years later, Henry Jones would have said to himself that George was making a "bluff" when he said he must go home as soon as he got warm; as it was, the thought which came to him was that the young man would be a long time getting warm.

The conversation now became general, but it had not gone on long before the participants were interrupted by a loud pounding on the door.

"Jehosaphat!" exclaimed Mr. Slavins; "there seems to be lots of people abroad for such a terrible night."

As he spoke he rose and made his way toward the door.

All looked toward the door with an air of interest. Perhaps the most interested one—although you could not have told it by his expression—was Henry Jones. Who could the newcomer be? he asked himself.

There was another loud rapping on the door and then a voice cried out:

"Open the door! Open, I say, in the name of the king!"

Had any of the rest been watching Henry Jones, they might have seen him give a sudden start. None were watching him, however, the eyes of all being upon the door.

"Jove! that fellow is certainly a redcoat," thought Henry Jones; "I wonder if there is more than one."

Mr. Slavins had reached the door by this time and without stopping to ask any questions he took down the bar and opened the door. Immediately four men strode into the room. That they were redcoats, could be seen at a glance, even though they were covered with snow, for the military hat, boots and overcoat proclaimed the fact more than words could have done.

"Aha! this looks more cheerful!" cried the leader of the four. "It's a horrible night out, friends."

"So it is; so it is," agreed Mr. Slavins who had quickly closed and barred the door. "Come into the kitchen, gentlemen, and take off your overcoats and let me brush the snow off you."

The four followed Mr. Slavins into the kitchen and divested themselves of their hats and overcoats, after which their host brushed the snow off their boots.

Those in the sitting-room waited in silence for the return of the visitors.

There was a placid look on Mrs. Slavins' face, an eager look on Tom's, while on the faces of George and Lucy

were looks which did not indicate pleasure. Indeed, George was almost frowning. The face of Henry Jones was calm; if he was displeased or put out by the coming of the four redcoats his expression did not show it.

A few minutes later Mr. Slavins and the four British soldiers re-entered the sitting-room and approached the fire-place. The leader of the four wore the uniform of a captain; the other three were evidently common soldiers.

Mr. Slavins asked the names of the soldiers and introduced the four to the members of his family and to George Saunders and Henry Jones.

When Captain Gilbert Sherwood was introduced to Lucy, and he saw and recognized the wonderful beauty of the girl, a peculiar light appeared in his eyes. The look which was in his eyes was one not good to see, and even this country maiden, unversed though she was in the ways of the world, did not like the look and shrunk back as if struck by a chilly wind.

Captain Sherwood noted this and his teeth came together and a peculiar gleam came into his eyes, but his tone and words were soft and pleasant as he acknowledged the introduction.

Henry Jones was the last person to whom Captain Sherwood was introduced, and as the two clasped hands they gazed each other straight in the eyes. A few moments thus, and then Captain Sherwood gave a start. He examined the youth's features intently, his gaze being searching in the extreme, but the other bore the scrutiny unflinchingly.

The captain suddenly seemed to realize that he was acting queerly, however, and with a "I'm pleased to know you, Mr. Jones," he dropped the youth's hand and turned away. There was a puzzled look in his eyes, however, and there was also something peculiar in the look which Henry Jones sent after the captain.

The British officer proceeded to explain the presence of himself and comrades so far from Philadelphia in the midst of such a terrible storm. He said that they had come out from Philadelphia on a hunting trip and that they had left their horses at a farmhouse that morning and gone into the timber in search of wild turkeys. They had intended to camp out that night, but the storm had come up and fearing that they might be snowed in and starve to death, they had set out in search of a place to stay until the storm was over. They had found the Slavins' home entirely by accident and were only too glad to find themselves in such comfortable and pleasant quarters. Such was the captain's explanation, and as he spoke of the quarters being pleasant, he gave Lucy an expressive glance.

The keen eyes of George noticed the glance and a frown appeared upon his face. Henry Jones, who saw everything, noted this and he said to himself that if George Saunders was not already a patriot the probabilities were that he soon would be; at any rate he would not have much affection for or sympathy with the redcoats.

When perhaps half an hour had passed, Henry Jones expressed to Mr. Slavins a desire to go to bed. The farmer lighted a candle and telling the youth to follow him, left the room.

The youth bade the others good-night and followed Mr. Slavins, who led the way upstairs and along a long hall and into a goodly sized room.

"I guess you will be comfortable in here," the man said; "you will find plenty of warm blankets, and I think you will sleep well. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mr. Slavins," was the reply.

As soon as the other had left the room and closed the door, the youth examined the fastenings and made the door as secure as he could.

"There is no telling what those redcoats might take it into their heads to do," he said to himself; "I didn't exactly like the way that captain looked at me—and, by the way, there is a fellow who is a scoundrel, or I'm no judge. The way he looked at Lucy Slavins made my blood boil. George Saunders will do well to keep his eyes on Captain Sherwood."

The youth did not undress, more than to take off his coat; this done, he threw himself upon the bed, first blowing the candle out, and then drawing the blanket over him he stretched himself out for a good sleep and rest.

When Mr. Slavins returned to the sitting-room Captain Sherwood turned to him and said:

"What did you say that young fellow's name was?"

"Henry Jones."

"Ah! Henry Jones, eh?"

"Yes."

"Who is he? Where is he from?"

"He said that he lives in Philadelphia."

"Then you don't know much about him?"

"Nothing at all except what he has told me."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; I never saw him in my life until this evening. He came in upon us about nine o'clock. Like yourselves, he was afraid that he might get lost and starve or freeze to death and he asked to be allowed to stay here over night."

"Oh, that is the way of it, eh?"

"Yes."

The others seemed surprised by the interest taken in the

strange youth by the captain and listened, wonderingly, to his questioning."

The British officer had a motive in asking the questions, however. He said no more just at the moment, but dropped his eyes and seemed to be thinking.

The others went ahead and talked of various things and had finally got around to the subject of the weather when they were suddenly startled by the action of Captain Sherwood.

"Great Jupiter!" the officer exclaimed, leaping to his feet, "I have it now! I know where I have seen that young fellow—I know who he is. I thought I had seen him before and now I know it. It was in Philadelphia several months ago, and although he was partially disguised at the time, I know him now. He is Dick Slater, the notorious rebel spy!"

CHAPTER III.

DICK ESCAPES.

To say the captain's announcement caused a sensation is stating the matter mildly.

All stared at him, open-mouthed, as if they hardly understood what he had said. Then exclamations escaped them.

"What!"

"You don't mean it!"

"That young fellow Dick Slater, the rebel spy?"

"Surely not! Why, he is only a mere youth."

The captain nodded his head grimly.

"So is Dick Slater only a mere youth," he said; "but he is the most dangerous and daring spy there is in the whole patriot army, just the same. Why, he isn't afraid to venture anywhere."

"And you are sure this young man is he?" asked Mr. Slavins.

"Yes, I am certain that he is."

The farmer's red face grew redder. He was evidently angry.

"And to think that I have given food and shelter to an enemy of the king!" he said, in a tone of disgust. "It is not pleasant to think of."

"I am glad to see that you are loyal to the king, Mr. Slavins," said the captain.

"Indeed, I am loyal, Captain Sherwood; and for a very little I would go upstairs and tell that rascally spy to get out of here in a hurry, bad as the night is!"

to let them know—

The cap^{ve} taken ^{fr} his head.

"Don't do it, Mr. Slavins," he said; "I have a better plan than that. Let him stay; and along toward morning we will go up and make a prisoner of him. Then when we can get away we will take him to Philadelphia with us and turn him over to General Howe."

This struck Mr. Slavins as being a good idea. He said as much.

"We will let him remain where he is, then," he said; "and it will be something to be proud of to have it to say that I aided in the capture of the notorious spy, Dick Slater."

The announcement of Captain Sherwood that the youth upstairs was the famous "rebel" spy, Dick Slater, had, as we have said, created a sensation. It had aroused a different feeling in the breasts of some from that which we have shown was aroused in the breast of Mr. Slavins, however. George Saunders and Lucy and Tom Slavins were shocked by the thought that the patriot spy, of whom they had heard so much and whom they had admired because of his bravery and splendid work for the great cause, was in danger. The thought which came to them at once was, that they must try to save him.

But how were they to do it? George and Lucy seized upon the time when the captain and Mr. Slavins were talking the matter of the intended capture of the "rebel" spy over, and, talking in whispers, evolved a plan of procedure.

This plan was acted upon at once. George rose and said that he must be going. Mr. and Mrs. Slavins told him not to be in a hurry, but Captain Sherwood looked as if he thought the young man was doing the right thing in going so soon. The three common soldiers, not having their eyes on Lucy, took no interest in the matter one way or the other.

George insisted that he must go, as his grandmother's rheumatism was so bad that he must get back with the herbs, and let her be brewing the tea. Then he took the bunch of herbs off the mantel and went out into the kitchen to put on his overcoat.

Lucy followed him, as did Tom, also, he having been told to do so by his sister. The captain had frowned portentously when he saw Lucy follow George, but when Tom went after the girl he seemed to breathe easier. Had he known why Tom went, he would not have felt so good.

Lucy was careful to push the connecting door nearly shut, and then she whispered to Tom:

"You go upstairs and warn Dick Slater of the plot to capture him. Tell him to open the window at the end of the hall and climb out on the shed roof and slide down

to the ground. George will be awaiting him there, and he will go home with George. You understand?"

"Yes," whispered Tom, eagerly, his eyes shining. He was delighted to think that he was to be of service to the cause of Liberty even to the extent of assisting a patriot to escape from the redcoats.

"Very well," said Lucy; "here is his overcoat—take it to him. Now go; hurry—but don't make any noise."

"All right;" the boy took the overcoat and stole out of the kitchen by another door, which opened into a hall in which was the stairway, and making his way up the stairs, cautiously, so as not to make any noise, he stole along the hall, pausing only when he reached the room in which Dick Slater—for we will acknowledge that "Henry Jones" was indeed the famous scout and spy—was lying, on the point of going to sleep.

Tom tapped on the door. He did not make much noise, for he did not wish any one in the sitting-room downstairs to hear him.

Dick Slater was a youth who usually slept with one eye and both ears open, so to speak. Even had he been sound asleep the slight tapping on the door would have aroused him; but he was not yet asleep and he was on his feet in an instant. He stepped to the door.

"Who is there?" he asked, in a low voice. Somehow, he suspected that the person was a friend, and that there was need of silence and secrecy.

"It's me, Tom Slavins," was the reply; "open the door."

Dick hastened to do so. Tom entered the room and then the youth pushed the door shut again.

"What do you want, Tom?" Dick asked.

"I have come to warn you!" replied the boy, his voice trembling with eagerness and excitement.

"To warn me?"

Dick was not surprised. He had suspected that the redcoats would be suspicious of him, and attempt to capture him.

"Yes, to warn you. Those redcoats downstairs say you are Dick Slater, the patriot spy, and they are going to try to capture you along toward morning, when you are sound asleep."

"So that is their scheme, is it?"

"Yes; and say, are you Dick Slater, sure enough?"

The boy's tone was eager.

Dick knew he was safe in telling the little fellow the truth, and said:

"Yes, I am Dick Slater, but I don't know how those redcoats discovered my identity."

"That Captain Sherwood was the fellow who discovered

it. He said that he saw you in Philadelphia several months ago, but that he was sure you were Dick Slater, even though you were partially disguised at the time, and he did not get a good look at you."

"I suspected that the worthy captain was suspicious of me," said Dick; "I didn't like the way he looked at me. Well, Tom, I am much obliged to you for warning me; though to tell the truth I don't know what to do. I hate to think of going out into the storm again, and I dislike to remain and cause trouble here in your home by offering fight. It wouldn't be treating your father and mother right to do that, after their kindness to me."

"Oh, but I know what you can do," Tom hastened to say; "Lucy told me to tell you. You are to open the window at the end of the hall and climb out onto the shed roof and then slip down to the ground. George Saunders will be there, waiting for you, and you are to go with him."

"Ah, that's the program, is it?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is all right, Tom, and I am much obliged to you, and to Lucy and George."

"Oh, that is all right; we are glad to be of service to you for we are patriots."

"Good for you!" said Dick. "Did you think to bring my overcoat?"

"Yes; here it is."

Dick took the garment and quickly donned it. Then he left the room, and going to the end of the hall, opened the window. He pulled his hat down well over his forehead, and then looked out. It was still snowing, but not so hard as when he first came to the house. Dick turned to Tom, and taking the boy's hand, shook it warmly.

"Good-by, Tom," he said; "I am much obliged to you and to your sister Lucy—please tell her so, will you not?—for your kindness in assisting me to escape from my enemies. I shall not forget it, and should the time come that I may have an opportunity to cancel my indebtedness, rest assured I shall take advantage of it."

"That's all right," said Tom, a pleased note to his voice; "we are as glad to be able to help you as you are to have us do it."

Then Dick climbed through the window, and letting go of the sill, went scooting downward at a lively rate. It was a splendid coast while it lasted, but it didn't last long. The youth shot over the edge of the roof and alighted in a snowdrift five feet deep.

Of course, he was not injured. A feather bed could not have been softer than was the snow. A dark figure stood

listened, wonder-
outlined against the side of the house as George Saunders, and he took hold of Dick's arm.

"Come," he said, "let's be getting away from here. Those redcoats might suspect something and make a search for us."

"I must have my horse," said Dick; "I couldn't think of going away and leaving him here."

"All right; it is as good a way for us to go as any. We can cut across lots and reach my home."

They made their way to the stable and Dick bridled and saddled his horse and led him forth from the stall. The horse was reluctant to come out into the snow; evidently he would have been satisfied to remain where he was.

"I know it is rather rough, old fellow," said Dick, "but it can't be helped, so come along."

"He'll have just as good quarters over at my place," said George.

The two made their way across an open field, and presently reached the edge of the timber. There was a rail fence, and George threw down three or four rails so that the horse could step over, then he replaced the rails.

"I don't want to leave anything for the guidance of the redcoats if they should try to learn which way you went," said George.

They then made their way through the timber, George in the lead, Dick following, leading the horse. They proceeded a distance of half a mile, Dick judged, and then they came out in a clearing at the farther side of which could be seen a couple of good-sized buildings—evidently a house and barn.

"This is my home," said George; "now we are all right. The redcoats don't suspect me of being a patriot, and if they should come here to look for you I will hide you where they can't find you."

"Thank you," said Dick; "you are very kind, and rest assured that if the opportunity ever comes for me to do something to, in a measure, repay you, I will take advantage of it."

"Oh, that is all right; I am glad to do it."

They were soon at the stable and the horse was led inside and unbridled and unsaddled, after which he was given some feed; then the two left the stable and made their way to the house.

"We folks are all patriots," said George, as they walked along; "but we have pretended to be loyal, as the majority of our neighbors are Tories, and we did not wish to get into trouble, if we could help it. Then, too, we are close to Philadelphia, and the redcoats are scouring the country almost constantly, and it would be as much as our lives are

worth to let them know that we are patriots. Even as it is, they have taken a good deal of our stock, and if they suspected that we were not loyal they would undoubtedly take all we have and probably burn us out of house and home besides."

"Quite likely you are right," agreed Dick. "All is fair in war times, and it is no sin to deceive the redcoats."

"I don't think so."

They were soon at the house, and while waiting for some one to come and open the door, after having knocked, George went on:

"I hope you won't think that I am cowardly for the way I have done. I made up my mind that I would stay at home this winter, as the patriots are unable to do anything, now, anyway, and I could do them no good by joining them at Valley Forge; and in the spring I am going to join Washington's army and fight for the great cause."

"Certainly I don't think you are cowardly," Dick hastened to assure the young man; "indeed, I think you are very wise in doing as you have been doing. Keep it up, and when spring comes, offer your services to General Washington. As you say, you could do him or the cause no good by joining the army at Valley Forge. There are quite enough men there, now, suffering for want of food and clothing."

The door opened at this juncture and the two entered the house. As soon as they had divested themselves of their overcoats they went into the sitting-room and found the family up. George introduced Dick to the different members of the family, consisting of the young man's father and mother, a sister whose name was Mary—a very pretty girl, by the way, and about sixteen years of age—a brother, Fred, aged ten, and Mr. Saunders' mother—the grandmother with the rheumatism, for whose benefit George had braved the fury of the snowstorm by going over to the Slavins' to get some herbs.

All greeted Dick pleasantly and seemed delighted to make his acquaintance. They had heard many stories regarding Dick Slater, and had often wished that they might know him, and now their wish was gratified.

George explained how it was that Dick had come home with him, and Mr. and Mrs. Saunders assured the youth that he was welcome to remain as long as he chose.

"Thank you," said Dick; "but as I am on my way to Philadelphia on important business, I must not encroach upon your hospitality a minute longer than is absolutely necessary. I will go on my way the instant the roads become passable."

"Which won't be for two or three days, I should judge," said George.

"I hope you are not a good prophet, George," smiled Dick; "for I don't want to have to remain here so long as that."

It was quite late, so all went to bed, Dick being given the "spare" room.

While the family, with Dick occupying the seat of honor, was seated at the breakfast-table, next morning, ten-year-old Fred, who had had to wait, came rushing into the dining-room in great excitement.

"The redcoats are comin'!" he cried, breathlessly. "There are four of them, and they are almost to the house!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEARCH.

All leaped to their feet in excitement.

"They are coming in search of you, Dick!" said George; "but they shan't get you. Come with me and I will show you a secure hiding place where they cannot find you."

Dick followed George and the two made their way upstairs to the garret. Here George went to what seemed to be the solid wall at one side and pressed on a certain spot. There was a clicking noise and a panel swung inward, revealing an opening behind.

"Get in there, quick!" said George, "and I will close the panel. They will be unable to find you if they do make search, and when they have gone I will come up and let you out."

"Very well, and thank you, George."

Dick passed through the opening and had just time to glance about him and note that he was in a narrow, passage-like space, when the panel went shut, and he could see nothing more, it being quite dark. He heard George's footsteps as he went back downstairs, and then these died away, and all was silence.

George succeeded in getting back downstairs before the redcoats had been admitted. Indeed, they had just knocked on the front door and he went and opened it.

He recognized the men at a glance. They were the four who had spent the night at the home of Mr. Slavins. They were covered with snow, as they had been forced to wallow through drifts four and five feet deep in coming. They recognized George instantly.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Saunders!" said Captain Sherwood; "I am glad to meet you again. May we come in?"

"Certainly," was the reply; "come in."

The four did so and then their leader lost no time in stating their business.

"You remember, Mr. Saunders," said the captain, "that there was a young stranger over to Mr. Slavins' last night, and that I recognized him as being Dick Slater, the rebel spy?"

"Yes, indeed; I remember," was the reply.

"And you remember that we said we would wait till along toward morning and then go to his room and make a prisoner of him?"

"Yes."

"Well, we waited till about three o'clock this morning, and then went to his room—only to find him missing; the bird had flown."

Captain Sherwood was looking straight at George in rather a searching manner, the young man thought, and he had a hard time preserving a look of innocence. He did fairly well, however, and simulating a look of surprise, exclaimed:

"You don't mean to tell me that!"

The captain nodded.

"Yes, it is the truth. In some way the fellow learned that we intended to capture him, and took refuge in flight."

The captain again fixed George with his eyes. It really seemed to the young man that the officer suspected him in some degree of having had something to do with warning the "rebel" spy.

"Perhaps he was afraid to remain in the house with four of the king's soldiers," suggested George; "and took leave at once, after having been shown to his room."

The captain shook his head slowly and doubtfully.

"That is possible, of course," he said; "but it is doubtful. He is a bold fellow, that Dick Slater, and unless he suspected that I recognized him he would not be likely to go out into the storm. He would have remained and hobbled with us and taken his chances.

"Well, it is, indeed, too bad that he escaped you," said George.

"So it is; we hate it, I assure you, and in the hope that he might have gotten over here, and that he had been given shelter, we came over to see about it. Have you seen anything of him?"

"No," he replied, with an assumption of sincerity, "I haven't seen him since he left the room last night, over at Mr. Slavins'."

The captain eyed George, searchingly.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

There was doubt in the tone, and George Saunders flushed, angrily. He was on the point of replying sharply, but restrained himself as he remembered that there were four of the soldiers, and that fighting was their trade. If they chose to handle him roughly—to kill him, even—they could do it and no one could prevent them. So he held his anger in check and forced himself to reply, quietly:

"Of course I'm sure. You don't doubt my word, do you?"

"Oh, certainly not," the officer said, but he said it in a tone which contradicted the words. "It is possible, however, that the rebel may have gotten into your house without your knowledge and be hiding somewhere. You can see that it is so terribly bad out that he could not have gone far."

George realized that the redcoats were determined to make a search of the house, but he shook his head and said:

"I hardly think such a thing is possible as that he could have done so. We bar the door at night, and he could not have gotten in."

The captain shook his head.

"You don't know Dick Slater," he said; "he can do anything. If he wished to enter this house he could do it, and I shall not be greatly surprised if we find him here."

There was a peculiar tone to the voice which told George that the officer was still suspicious that he had befriended the "rebel" spy. George felt that Dick was so securely hidden that the redcoats could not find him, however, and so he said, with apparent frankness and candor:

"You are certainly welcome to search the house. I am sure that you will not find the 'rebel' here, as some of us would have discovered his presence ere this had he been in the house."

"We will see; come, men."

The four redcoats went out into the kitchen where the family was seated at breakfast. All the members of the family put on as great a look of surprise as they could.

"These gentlemen wish to search the house, father," said George, by way of explanation.

"They wish to search the house—for what reason?" asked Mr. Saunders. "We are loyal king's men, sir," he continued, addressing the captain. "Why should you wish to search the house?"

"We are looking for a rebel spy, sir," replied Captain Sherwood; "he was at Mr. Slavins', last night, but slipped away, and we thought it possible that he had come over here and taken refuge in your house."

"I don't see how he could have obtained entrance," was

the reply; "we bar the doors at night, and I don't think he could possibly have entered—and even if he had we should have discovered his presence this morning."

The captain shook his head.

"Perhaps not," he said; "this spy is the notorious Dick Slater, and he is as cunning as a serpent. He could remain in your house a week without your knowledge, if he set out to do so. If you do not object, we will make a thorough search for him."

The captain said, "If you do not object," in a tone which implied that Mr. Saunders would not dare object, and that if he should do so it would be of no avail. Evidently the British officer was somewhat suspicious, and was determined to make a thorough search of the house.

Mr. Saunders hastened to assure the captain that he had no objections to the search being made.

"In fact, I wish it to be made," he declared; "if that rebel spy is here, I wish to know it, and see him captured and dragged off to Philadelphia. I don't want him here in my house!"

As an actor, Mr. Saunders was quite a success. One would scarcely suspect that he did not mean what he said.

"I think and feel just as father does, regarding the matter," said George; "if that rebel spy is here, I want that he shall be found and dragged forth. I will go with you and help look for him."

"All right; lead the way!" ordered Captain Sherwood.

"Where shall we go first?"

"Have you a cellar?"

"Yes."

"Then to the cellar, first."

George led the way down into the cellar.

The redcoats searched there with great thoroughness, peering into every dark corner and leaving only after they had satisfied themselves beyond all doubt that the person for whom they were searching was not hidden in the cellar.

"Where next?" asked George.

"We will search all the rooms on the ground floor," said the captain, "and then we will go upstairs."

This was done; every room on the ground floor being visited and searched. Of course, the "rebel" spy was not found, and the little party made its way upstairs.

They were no more successful here, and a sullen look began to show on the face of Captain Sherwood. It was plain that he had expected to find Dick Slater somewhere in the house.

Suddenly his face lighted up.

"Is there an attic?" he asked.

"Yes," replied George; "shall we go up there?"

"Certainly; that is the place of all places that he would be likely to hide. I'll wager a month's pay that we find him there."

George led the way up into the attic. This consisted of one good-sized room which was, seemingly, perfectly square. As we know, however, there was a narrow passage-like compartment at one side.

There was an accumulation of rubbish and traps of various kinds, such as usually find their way to an attic, and the redcoats immediately began prying about and searching for the youth whom they thought must be hiding there.

It did not take them long to finish the search, however, and the result was disappointing to them. They had not found Dick Slater.

Captain Sherwood stood near the centre of the room and glared about him with a baffled look on his face.

"He's not here, that is evident," he admitted; "he is not in the house for we have searched it high and low. Jove! I'm disappointed; I was sure we would find him. I don't see where he could have gone."

"Well, if Dick Slater is as cunning and resourceful as you say he is, captain, there are plenty of things he could have done and places he could have gone without coming here. Doubtless he is camped out in the woods somewhere."

George said this with apparent frankness, just as if he believed what he said, but Captain Sherwood shook his head, doubtingly.

"Surely no person could camp out in the woods in such weather as this," he said; "he would undoubtedly freeze to death."

"Perhaps so; well, he isn't here, at any rate."

The captain could not gainsay this. He had searched the house thoroughly and could not deny the truth of George's statement.

Suddenly his face lighted up, however.

"Why didn't I think of it before?" he exclaimed. "Likely he is in your stable. We went through the stable over at Mr. Slavins' before coming here and found it warm and comfortable there. A man could sleep warm in the midst of the hay and I have no doubt it is the same in your stable."

George fell in with this suggestion at once. He was only too glad of an excuse for getting the redcoats down out of the attic and out of the house.

"That is well thought of," he said. "It is possible that he might have taken refuge in the stable. I was out and

fed the horses, but did not look around any. He might have been there, although I saw no signs of any one."

"Come," said Captain Sherwood; "we will go and take a look through the stable at once."

George quickly led the way down the attic stairs and on down to the sitting-room.

"I didn't think you'd find him," remarked Mr. Saunders; "I didn't see how any one could have gotten into the house without our knowledge."

"We're going to search the stable now, father," said George. "Captain Sherwood thinks it possible that the rebel may have taken refuge there."

"That's a good idea," agreed Mr. Saunders. "He might have entered the stable, and if he is there I hope you gentlemen will find and capture him."

"We will certainly do that," said Captain Sherwood. "If he's there we'll find him and will, undoubtedly, capture him."

George led the way out of the house and the five men ploughed their way through the snow and reached the stable.

A thorough search was made, but it was a fruitless one, of course, and the disappointed redcoats took their departure and went ploughing back through the snow toward the Slavins' home.

They had scarcely gotten out of the yard before George hastened up into the attic and let Dick out of his hiding place.

"Have they gone?" asked the youth.

"Yes," replied George, "they have gone; you are safe now."

"Thanks to you," remarked Dick, gratefully; "but for your kindness in secreting me they would have captured me."

"Oh, that is all right; we are only too glad that we were enabled to be of service to you."

Dick spent the day at the Saunders home. He was careful to keep within doors as he did not know but that the redcoats might be keeping watch on the house.

It turned out to be a nice, bright day. The snow was soft and melted rapidly and packed down till, by the time evening came, it did not seem to be more than a foot and a half deep.

George went over to Mr. Slavins' immediately after supper and was self-sacrificing enough to remain only about half an hour. Then he came back, and brought the news that the redcoats were still at the Slavins home.

"Well, as soon as it is dark I will be going," said Dick; "the snow has melted so much to-day and has become so

packed that I don't think my horse will have much difficulty in making his way along.

Mr. and Mrs. Saunders told Dick he was perfectly welcome to remain, but the youth had important business in Philadelphia, and as soon as it was dark he bade good-by to all the members of the Saunders family, and, mounting his horse, rode away.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN PRESSES HIS SUIT.

As Dick rode eastward on the road leading toward Philadelphia, an interesting scene was taking place in the big sitting-room of the Slavins home.

One of the horses had suddenly been taken sick and Mr. and Mrs. Slavins and Tom were at the stable doctoring the animal. The three had not much more than left the house when Captain Sherwood gave his three soldiers a meaning look and they got up and left the room and the house. This left Lucy alone with the British officer, and when she noticed the fact the girl arose to her feet and started to leave the room, with the remark that she must go and assist her father and mother.

Captain Sherwood leaped to his feet, however, and barred the girl's way.

"Don't go, Miss Slavins—Lucy," he said, in what he intended to be a gentle and pleasing voice; "I have something to say to you."

Lucy paused because she had to, but she turned pale and there was a startled look in her eyes. The captain had been very attentive to her during the day and she more than half-suspected what it was that he wished to say.

"Really, Captain Sherwood, you must not detain me," she said; "my parents need my assistance."

"Not at all," protested the captain; "my men have gone to the stable and will give your father and mother all the assistance they need. You stay here with me; I have something of importance to tell you."

But Lucy did not wish to stay. There was something about the bold Captain Sherwood which she did not like; there was a look in his dark eyes which frightened her, she knew not why.

"I—I—really—must go," stammered Lucy.

But the captain was determined that she should not leave until after she had heard what he had to say. He stepped forward and taking Lucy by the arm, led her back

to the fire-place and seated her. Seating himself near by, he said:

"Miss Slavins—Lucy, no doubt you will be surprised by what I am going to say, but I cannot help it. I have known you not longer than twenty-four hours, but short as has been the time, in it I have learned to love you—indeed, I may say, that I loved you from the first moment I laid eyes upon you, and——"

"Indeed, indeed, you must not talk that way to me, Captain Sherwood," said Lucy, rising to her feet and making a restraining gesture; "it is not right that you should do so."

"And why not?" exclaimed the captain, passionately. "I love you and certainly there can be no harm in my telling you so."

"Oh, but there is, sir; you mustn't talk to me so. It isn't right, because—because——"

A dark look came over Captain Sherwood's face.

A thought struck him. Lucy Slavins was the sweetheart of George Saunders. He was sure of it. The thought made him wild with anger. What! Could it be possible that he, Captain Sherwood of the king's army, should be forced to stand aside for a country booby? No, no! It could not be; it should not be. He would win the beautiful girl away from her lover or know the reason why. Although he felt more like cursing aloud than doing aught else, the captain forced himself to look pleasant and his accents were sweet as honey as he said, in a low, gentle voice:

"There can be nothing wrong in a man's telling a girl he loves her, Lucy, and I must tell you that I love you dearly and want you for my wife."

Captain Sherwood seized Lucy's hand, and although she tried to free it, he held it tightly and went on in a voice full of fire and passion;

"I am an officer in the British army, and, as such, receive a good salary; furthermore, I come of a wealthy family and I am amply able to support a wife in the best of style. If you will consent to marry me I will guarantee to make you the happiest little woman in the world. Say that you will be mine!"

To do Captain Sherwood justice, he really thought that he was in love. The fact that he had been in this same condition a score of times before, did not occur to him. He was one of those fickle-hearted fellows who fall in love with every pretty face they see, so that it was no wonder that he imagined himself to be in love with Lucy Slavins, for never in his life had he seen a more beautiful girl.

"It is impossible, Captain Sherwood," said Lucy; "I

do not love you and cannot be your wife. In fact, I—I—am——"

Captain Sherwood leaped to his feet, with a muttered imprecation. His face grew dark with rage.

"I understand!" he cried, fiercely; "I know what you would say—that you are engaged to be married to that fellow, Saunders. Am I not right?"

But Lucy was a girl who had some spirit of her own. She, too, leaped to her feet and her eyes flashed as she said:

"I don't know as that is any affair of yours, sir. It is sufficient to say that I do not love you and cannot be your wife."

But Captain Sherwood was one not easily to be balked.

"I will make you love me!" he cried. "You shall be my wife; I swear it!"

"What! Do you threaten me?" exclaimed Lucy, scornfully. "Do you call that the language of a soldier and brave man?"

"That is neither here nor there. I mean exactly what I say."

The captain was very angry, indeed. His eyes fairly flashed fire.

"Do you think that the proper way to go about making me love you?" asked Lucy. "By threatening me, I mean."

What reply the captain would have made can only be conjectured, for at this instant the girl's parents and brother and the three redcoats were heard entering the house.

Captain Sherwood and Lucy seated themselves and the captain had just gained sufficient control of his features so that the fact that he was angry and excited could not be told when the party entered the sitting-room.

"How is Dobbin, father?" asked Lucy.

Dobbin was the name of the horse which they had been doctoring.

"He's better, Lucy."

"I'm glad of that. I hope he will get well."

"I hope so. We would miss Dobbin greatly next summer if he were to die."

All sat down in front of the big fire-place, but they had not much more than done so before Captain Sherwood surprised them by saying that he and his comrades must be going.

"There is a crust on the top of the snow," he said; "and that will make walking good. We will go to the place where we left our horses, get the animals and start for Philadelphia. We can easily reach there before morning.

Mr. and Mrs. Slavins pressed the captain to stay, telling him that he was welcome to remain as long as he

liked, but he said he must be going, and, donning their overcoats, the four bade good-by to all the members of the Slavins family and took their departure.

The three soldiers were very much surprised by the action of their commander, and as soon as they were well away from the house one of their number ventured to ask the captain what had caused him to make up his mind to leave so suddenly.

The fact was that the three soldiers were cronies of Captain Sherwood, and there was but little that he would keep secret from them. This being true, he did not hesitate to tell them the truth.

"I've fallen in love with that girl back there, boys," he said. "I asked her to be my wife, but she refused—I learned that she is engaged to that country bumpkin, Saunders—and treated me with scorn. I have made up my mind to have her, however, and since she refused to go with me, willingly, I am going to take her by force."

"Then why are you leaving, cap?"

"That is simple enough. Before I capture my bird I must have a cage to put her in. I am going to look for a cage."

Evidently Captain Sherwood was a villain of deepest dye.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK AND THE QUAKER.

Dick Slater rode onward at as fast a gait as it was possible for his horse to travel.

This was not very fast, as the going was not the best in the world, by any means. The snow had crusted sufficiently to hold up the weight of a human being, but the hoofs of a horse cut right through, and this made it hard for the animal to get along. The sharp edges of the crust cut the horse's legs till they bled.

The animal made his way along, however, and showed no disposition to rebel against being forced to travel under such unfavorable circumstances.

Dick crossed the Schuylkill River and rode onward, drawing slowly and steadily nearer and nearer to the city of Philadelphia. He knew that dangers awaited him there, but he did not hesitate. General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, wished to obtain information regarding the intentions of the British, if such a thing was possible, and Dick was the one who had been selected for the task.

The youth had proven his abilities in the work of spying upon the British on many occasions, and when there was a difficult and dangerous bit of work to be done he was usually the one chosen to do it.

He reached the city about three o'clock and entered on foot, having left his horse tied in the timber near an old cabin which was unoccupied. The animal was tied in a shed-stable, and would not suffer from the cold.

Dick made his way along without hesitation, after having successfully slipped past the sentinel at the street where he had entered the city, and it seemed as if he knew where he was going. This was, indeed, the case; it was not the first time that winter that the youth had visited Philadelphia.

He turned up one street and down another, and after a brisk walk of twenty minutes, entered a yard and made his way around to the rear of a two-story frame house which stood well back from the street.

Dick approached the door and rapped upon it in a peculiar manner.

He waited for a few minutes, and not hearing any sound from within, knocked again.

This time he did not have to wait. The door opened almost instantly, thus proving that the person within had been standing at the door, waiting for the second signal.

"Is it indeed thee?" remarked a sepulchral voice. "Come in, friend Dick. I am right glad to see thee!"

The youth obeyed and the door was closed, quickly, and barred.

"Wait one minute, Dick, and I will strike a light," said the Quaker—for such he evidently was.

It did not take the man long to strike a light, and then, by the light of the candle, it could be seen that he was a large, broad-shouldered man, with a cleanly shaven face, firm jaw and keen, gray eyes.

"Well, Mr. Heywood, what is the latest news?" asked Dick, when he had become seated.

"There is not much news, friend Dick; things are rather quiet in Philadelphia, just at the present time."

"But regarding General Howe's plans," said Dick, eagerly; "have you secured any information in that direction?"

"Yea, verily, friend Dick; I have learned a few things which will, no doubt, be of interest to thee, and to thy great and good commander, General Washington. I will tell thee at once."

"Do so, Mr. Heywood," said Dick, eagerly.

The man then began talking in low tones, and continued to do so for a quarter of an hour, Dick listening

intently. That the information was of interest to the youth was evidenced by the look upon his face.

The two had just finished talking when there came a loud knock on the door. The Quaker quickly extinguished the light.

"I wonder who it can be?" remarked Dick, in a cautious whisper.

"Hard telling, friend Dick," was the reply; "possibly some of the spying redcoats or Tories, of whom there are several families in the immediate neighborhood, saw you enter and have come to investigate."

"I hope not, for your sake."

"Oh, that does not matter; it is for thy safety only that I have fears."

"What will you do?"

"Verily, I know not; I think that I shall just let them keep on knocking."

There was another loud knock just then and a voice called out:

"Open the door, in the name of the king!"

"Redcoats, sure enough," whispered Dick; "perhaps I had better slip out the front way while you hold their attention here at the rear by opening the door as if to see what they want."

"Doubtless that is as good an idea as any. Hasten, friend Dick, but do not make any more noise than thee can possibly help."

"Very well; good-by, Mr. Heywood."

"Fare thee well, friend Dick; and don't forget what I have told thee."

"I'll not forget."

Dick had been in the house before and knew the location of the rooms and the halls. He left the room, and, entering the hall, made his way along it till he reached the front of the house. Here there was a door, but Dick thought it only the part of caution to make an observation before venturing to open the door. In a front room adjoining the hallway was a window. Dick made his way to this window and looked out.

An exclamation almost escaped him.

A lot of redcoats were in the yard. The house was surrounded!

What should he do? Dick asked himself this question, but found it a very difficult one to answer. It looked as if he could do nothing. It seemed as if he were caught like a rat in a trap.

Even while recognizing the fact that he was threatened with capture—and capture probably meant death—Dick did not think so much of himself as of his friend, the

Quaker. The youth hated to think that he would be the means of getting Mr. Heywood into trouble—for the finding of a "rebel" spy in the Quaker's house would certainly get him into trouble. He would be arrested and thrown into prison, and if he escaped being shot or hung he would be lucky.

Dick made up his mind that he must not let the redcoats find him in the house. But how was he to help it? This was, indeed, a hard question, but Dick set his wits to work. He had been in tight places before and escaped; why not again?

He heard the sound of a door opening at the rear and then came the murmur of voices.

"Mr. Heywood has opened the door," thought the youth; "the redcoats will be looking for me in another moment, and I must be doing something."

Dick hastened out into the hall, and making his way to the stairs, ascended to the second floor. He went to a window and looked out into the yard at the rear of the house.

There were no redcoats in sight. Doubtless all had entered. The youth thought he might succeed in getting away unperceived.

He lifted the window and stepped through and out onto the shed roof. There was no snow on the roof, the sun having melted it off during the day.

This made it possible for Dick to slide slowly and cautiously down to the edge of the shed roof. Here he paused, and holding himself steady, peered over and downward.

There was no one in sight. The redcoats had all entered the house—that is, all who had been at the rear; those Dick had seen out in front were doubtless still there, and probably some at the two sides of the building.

Realizing that he had no time to spare, the youth leaped to the ground. He made scarcely any noise at all when he struck, and with a glance toward the open door, he strode swiftly and as silently as possible away. He expected to hear a command to halt, but was agreeably disappointed. The redcoats must have all had their attention attracted in some other direction, for Dick succeeded in getting out of the yard and clear away without having been seen.

"That's what I call luck!" he said to himself, as he hastened down the alley. And his good luck continued with him, for he succeeded in getting away and out of the city without having encountered any of the British.

He walked rapidly, for he wished to be well started on his way back to Valley Forge before daylight. It was only a little more than a mile to the cabin in the woods

where he had left his horse, and it did not take the youth long to walk that distance.

The cabin was an old one, and was so secluded and so well concealed in among the trees and underbrush that Dick had fancied that no one knew of it save himself, but he was to learn that he was mistaken, for as he drew near he heard voices coming from within. And just in front of the cabin four horses were tied to trees.

"Who can be in there?" the youth asked himself.

He knew that there were some goodly sized cracks in the wall at the rear, and making his way around there he applied his eyes to one of the cracks and looked in. A candle was burning and by its light Dick saw that the occupants of the cabin were Captain Sherwood and his three men.

"Hello!" exclaimed the youth to himself, "what are they doing here? I thought they were at Mr. Slavins'."

Dick was somewhat puzzled by the actions and words of the four. They were moving about and were evidently examining the interior of the cabin.

"I think it will do," said Captain Sherwood; "we can chink up those cracks, and it will be comfortable in here with a good fire going, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes," replied one of the men; "it will be all right."

"Certainly," said another.

"Good!" exclaimed the captain. "Well, we can come out here when it is daylight and fix the cabin up. We may as well go on into the city now and get something to eat and snatch a couple of hours' sleep."

The four left the cabin, and Dick saw them mount their horses and ride away.

"Jove! it's lucky they didn't take a notion to look in the stable," he thought; "had they done so they would have found my horse and then I should have been forced to fight the four of them."

Dick soon had his horse out of the stable, and, mounting, rode away. He followed the redcoats till the main road was reached, and then when the four turned eastward toward Philadelphia, he headed toward the west, away from the city. As he rode along he thought of what he had heard the redcoats say in the old cabin, and he wondered what they intended doing. Why should they wish to fix it up so as to make it comfortable? Dick did not have a very high opinion of Captain Sherwood and his three comrades, however, and he made up his mind that they were going to fix the cabin up as a sort of headquarters or rendezvous where they could come and drink and gamble.

Having so decided, he dismissed the matter from his

mind and rode onward at as rapid a gait as the condition of the road would permit.

It was broad daylight before he reached the Schuylkill, and after he had crossed the river he made better headway. He arrived at the Saunders home at half-past eight, and stopped to get breakfast and feed for his horse.

He was given a hearty welcome by all the members of the family, and it was plain, from the light which shone in the eyes of pretty Mary, George's sister, that she was very glad, indeed, to see Dick. The youth, who was a close observer, was amused to note that George encouraged Mary to lay siege to their visitor's heart; Dick knew why the young man did so—he was slightly jealous and feared the handsome young "Liberty Boy" might try to win Lucy Slavins away from him. Dick was an honest, manly youth, however, and as he had a sweetheart in far-away New York, he did not give Mary any encouragement. There was not anything of the flirt about him.

All were in good spirits, this morning, and laughed and talked, merrily, as they ate. George was in excellent spirits, and Dick was not at a loss to account for this—he had learned that Captain Sherwood and his three companions had taken their departure from the Slavins' home.

"I don't blame him for being glad that the British captain has gone," thought Dick; "that fellow is a scoundrel, if ever there was one."

After breakfast Dick got ready to start, and having stated that he would stop a few minutes at the Slavins home to tell them that he was much obliged to them for their kindness to him the evening before, George promptly said he would go along; and then Mary said she would go, too.

"I intended to go over to-day, anyway," she explained, "to see Lucy; so we will go now."

Dick hastened to say he would be pleased to have them go.

"I am afraid my reception will be rather cold," he said, "and if you two are along it may make things more pleasant. Mr. and Mrs. Slavins are real Tories, you know."

"Yes, and they think we are," said Mary, "but we aren't. We are the strongest kind of patriots, but in order to protect ourselves from the redcoats who have repeatedly foraged in this neighborhood, we have pretended to be loyalists."

"All is fair in love or war," smiled Dick. "It is no sin to deceive the redcoats."

"So do I think all is fair in love or war!" exclaimed Mary, with a shy glance at Dick.

"Here, here! you must be careful, Dick, my boy!" the

youth exclaimed to himself. "You mustn't give this sweet girl any chance to really and truly lose her heart."

He bade good-by to Mr. and Mrs. Saunders and Master Fred, and then, accompanied by George and Mary, made his way over to the Slavins' home. He walked beside Mary, and led his horse, while George walked ahead.

Lucy and Tom Slavins were undisguisedly glad to see Dick, but their parents were somewhat cold in their manner toward the youth. They were loyalists, and thought that any one who fought against King George was committing treason of the worst kind.

"I am not a hypocrite, young man," said Mr. Slavins, "and I will say that I wish the British soldiers who were here night before last had captured you."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Lucy, reproachfully.

"That is all right, Miss Lucy," said Dick; "you need not mind. I had much rather that your father should speak his mind in that fashion than pretend to be my friend and then take the first opportunity to work me harm. I hope that some day he will see that the king has no right to rule we people of America, and come over to our side."

"Never!" cried Mr. Slavins. "I will never be a rebel!"

"That is not the proper word for the brave men who are fighting for their liberty," said Dick; "we are not rebels, but are simply men who believe that we have a right to govern ourselves, and that a man called king, who lives on the other side of the ocean and who has never seen us and cares nothing for us, has no right to rule over us and force us to pay tribute to him."

"He is a just king, and our rightful ruler," said Mr. Slavins.

"He is a tyrant and a robber!" cried Lucy, her face flushed, her beautiful eyes shining.

"Lucy!" exclaimed her mother, horrified.

"Where do you get your rebel sentiments from?" asked her father, frowning severely.

"It doesn't matter where," replied the brave girl; "it ought to be plain to any one who will think a moment that the King of England has no right to rule over us and force us to support him in extravagant style. We are Americans, and have a right to be free and govern ourselves."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed her mother. "Lucy, you must be careful how you talk. What if you had said something like that when Captain Sherwood and his men were here."

"I would like to tell them the truth to their teeth!" said the spirited girl.

Dick was delighted and could not help admiring the girl for her spunk. He thought she was very beautiful in her

anger and excitement, and he judged from the look on George Saunders' face that he thought the same.

The youth had no time to waste, however, and so he again thanked Mr. and Mrs. Slavins for their kindness to him the night before, and then bidding them all good-by, he mounted his horse and rode away in the direction of Valley Forge, which place he reached a little before noon.

He went at once to the house occupied by General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental army.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SLAVINS HEADED OFF.

Dick was there nearly an hour, and the result of his interview with the commander-in-chief was soon made apparent. Immediately after dinner there was a stir in the encampment.

The company of "Liberty Boys" under Dick Slater, accompanied by another hundred of the regular soldiers, left the camp about two o'clock and marched eastward.

Where were they going? This was the question which was asked a hundred times, but no one could answer. Dick Slater, who was in command of the force, was the only person who knew the intended destination of the patriots, and he kept a close mouth. There would be plenty of time to tell where they were going when they were farther on their way.

The snow had melted considerable that day and was soft and slippery on the surface, but as evening came on the top gradually grew hard, and by dark it was frozen hard enough to hold up the soldiers. This made the walking easier, and Dick did not call a halt for supper till nearly nine o'clock. Then the men built fires and were soon eating and warming at the same time.

Of the entire force at Valley Forge not more than two hundred men had sound, whole shoes; the two hundred in question were the "Liberty Boys," who, having done most of their chasing around on horseback, had not worn their shoes greatly, and one hundred of the regular soldiers, picked here and there from among the total number of soldiers in the encampment. And these were the men who were with the "Liberty Boys."

After a rest of an hour the party broke camp and marched onward down the road. This was kept up till after midnight, and then Dick called a halt and they went into

camp. Fires were built and guards posted, and then the tired soldiers wrapped themselves in their rugged blankets and throwing themselves down by the fires, went to sleep.

They were up at daylight and ate the remnant of their lunch, after which they again set out down the road and marched steadily till nearly noon when they came to the home of the Saunders'. In reaching there they had to pass the Slavins' home, and the family was out in the yard and watched them march past, in open-eyed amazement.

When they saw and recognized Dick, Lucy and Tom waved their hands and called out a greeting to him, but their parents made no demonstration.

"What does it mean, Martha?" asked Mr. Slavins, when he saw the party stop in front of the Saunders home. "Do you suppose they can have gotten an inkling of the fact that the British were coming up here to force the rebels of the neighborhood to swear allegiance to the king's cause?"

Mrs. Slavins shook her head slowly. "I can't say, Martin," she replied, "but it is possible that that young man, Dick Slater, may have learned that something of the kind was on foot. You know he went to Philadelphia."

"So he did, so he did!" There was a frown on Mr. Slavins' face. "Do you suppose, Martha, that he could, by any possibility, have learned where the British got their information as to who in the neighborhood are rebels?"

"It would be impossible to say, Martin. I wish now that you had had nothing to do with the affair. It does seem as if it were not just right to give information against people who have been our neighbors for years."

"I know it seems hard, Martha, but they ought not to have rebelled against our good King George; besides, this need not cause any harm to befall them. All they will have to do will be to swear allegiance to the king and then they will not be harmed."

"But some of them are so bitter against the king and so set in their ways that I fear they will never swear allegiance to the king," said Mrs. Slavins; "and in that case they are liable to come to harm, are they not?"

"Yes, in that case, they are."

"What will the British do to them, Martin?"

Martin hesitated. Then he said, reluctantly:

"Well, I suppose they will make them prisoners; possibly they may even hang some of the more obstinate ones."

"That will be terrible, Martin."

There was a troubled look on Mr. Slavins' face, but he said, as severely as he could:

"It will serve them right; traitors should expect no mercy."

The troubled look did not leave Mrs. Slavins' face, however. The wives of some of the patriots of the neighborhood were dear friends of hers. She had known them for years. The thought that these women's husbands might be hung and their homes burned, was very distressing to her. She said no more at the time, however, but went into the house.

Mr. Slavins and his wife had talked in low tones so Lucy and Tom had not heard what was said. In truth, they were so busy talking themselves that they had no ears for anything else. They were wondering what had brought the party of patriot soldiers to the vicinity, and were discussing the matter earnestly. They were greatly excited and hoped that it meant trouble for the redcoats.

"I suppose they've just stopped for their dinner," said Tom; "and that they will go on as soon as they have had something to eat." The boy's tone said that he wished he might be mistaken and that the patriot soldiers might remain in the neighborhood. He had no hopes that they would do so, however, as he could think of no reason why they should stay.

"You run over there, Tom," said Lucy, eagerly, "and find out all you can. Tell George I want to know all about it. He and Dick Slater are great friends and doubtless he will know what the patriots are here for and what they intend doing."

"All right, sis, I'm off!" cried Tom, only too glad of the chance to go, and he hastened out of the yard and down the road.

Tom was back again inside of half an hour and was brimful of information. The patriots had come to stay, he said, at least for a while. A force of redcoats was coming into that neighborhood for the purpose of making the patriot farmers swear allegiance to the king. Dick Slater had learned of this in some manner and General Washington had sent him here with this force to protect the patriots and teach the redcoats a lesson.

Tom and Lucy were so eager and excited over the news that they did not notice how their parents took it. Mr. Slavins turned pale and an exclamation came very near escaping his lips. Mrs. Slavins turned pale also and looked greatly troubled.

"I fear there is going to be bloody work in our fair neighborhood soon," she murmured. "Oh, this cruel war!"

Mr. Slavins went out into the kitchen and beckoned to his wife, who quickly joined him there.

"What is it, Martin?" she asked.

"I wish to tell you that I am going away for a few hours, Martha." He spoke low so that Lucy and Tom could not hear him.

"Going away?"

"Yes."

"Where to, Martin?"

"I must go and meet the British soldiers and warn them that a rebel force is here waiting for them. It would be terrible if they were to walk right into a trap."

"There are going to be terrible goings on here soon, anyhow, Martin," said the woman, soberly; "I wish you hadn't had anything to do with this affair."

"I wish so, myself now, Martha; but it is too late for regrets. I am into it and the least I can do now is to go and warn the king's soldiers of the danger which threatens them."

Martin Slavins left the house and yard and made his way across a field and entered some timber. He wondered if he had been seen by any of the "rebels." He hoped not and made his way onward through the timber at as rapid a pace as possible. He made a wide circuit, intending to go clear around the home of Mr. Saunders where the patriot soldiers were and strike the road a half a mile to the eastward.

He had almost made the circuit and was within a hundred yards of the road when he suddenly found himself confronted by one of the hated "rebels."

The patriot had risen up right in Mr. Slavins' path and now held him covered by a musket which was leveled full at the man's head.

"Halt, there! Who are you?" cried the "Liberty Boy"—for it was one of the youths. "Stand where you are and give an account of yourself!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REDCOATS APPEAR.

The Tory stood still, an angry, baffled look on his face. "What do you mean?" he asked. "You have no right to stop me."

"Oh, yes, I have," replied Bob Estabrook, for this was the name of the youth; "I have the right of might, you see. Who are you and where were you going?"

Martin Slavins hesitated.

"I live a mile down the road," he said, presently; "I am on my way home; kindly let me pass."

"I couldn't think of doing so," was the reply.

"Why not?"

"It's against orders."

"Whose orders?"

"Dick Slater's."

Martin Slavins groaned, inwardly. He feared that he was going to be unable to warn the British of their danger. He pleaded with Bob Estabrook to let him pass, but to no avail.

"I'm not going to let you go, so you needn't waste any more breath," said Bob, decidedly. "Even if I were to do so you could not go far. We have scouts out all along down the road, and you would be halted before you had gone a quarter of a mile. Some of the boys are pretty quick on trigger, and you might get shot."

"But why not let me go on?" protested Martin Slavins. "Surely there can be no harm in letting me go to my home."

"Perhaps there might not be any harm in it," was the quiet reply; "that is not for me to say, however. We have orders to permit no one to pass us for we are looking for the redecoats every minute and we cannot afford to take any chances on letting some one get through and carry the news to the enemy that we are here, waiting for them. I suppose that isn't what you wish to get through for?"

Bob gave the Tory a sharp, searching look as he said this, and in spite of himself Mr. Slavins could not help flushing up. He looked guilty and keen-eyed Bob saw it.

"Aha! that is what you were up to!" the youth exclaimed, with an air of conviction. "I'm glad I headed you off."

"I—I assure you you are mistaken, young man," the Tory stammered. But Bob was not to be deceived.

"Actions and looks speak louder than words, Mr. Man," he said; "come with me."

"Where to?" The man looked frightened as he asked the question.

"You'll find out quickly enough. Right about, face; forward, march!"

There was nothing for it but to obey, and Martin Slavins, looking crestfallen and frightened, turned and marched back through the timber in the direction of the home of Mr. Saunders.

They soon reached there and Bob sent word in to Dick that he had a prisoner for him.

Dick was in the house, eating his dinner, but came out at once.

"Ah! it is you, is it, Mr. Slavins?" he remarked, and then without waiting for a reply he turned to Bob, who was surprised to know that Dick knew the man.

"Where did you find him, Bob?" asked Dick.

"About half a mile away, down the road."

"Humph! Which way was he going?"

"Toward the east."

Dick frowned and gazed sternly at Martin Slavins. Then he dropped his eyes and seemed to ponder for a few moments. Next he glanced around him. On every side were "Liberty Boys" and patriot soldiers.

"Bob," he said, "you may return to your station."

As Bob turned away, Dick beckoned to Mr. Slavins.

"Come with me," he said; "I wish to have a few words with you."

Dick led the way to one side out of hearing of the patriot soldiers and then eyeing his companion, sternly, he said:

"Mr. Slavins, I know all. I know that you furnished the British with the names of all your neighbors who are patriots; I know, too, that you were on your way, just now, to warn the approaching party of redcoats that we are here waiting for them. By right, I should hold you a prisoner, but in consideration of the fact that it so happens that no damage has been done, and for the sake of your family, two of the members of which are ardent patriots, I will, if you will give me your word of honor that you will never again lend aid or assistance to the British in any way, shape or manner, permit you to return to your home. Will you do it?"

Martin Slavins was pretty badly frightened. He was in such a frame of mind that it did not take him long to decide.

"I promise," he said. "Let me go home and if the war lasts ten years longer I will never give the British aid or information of any kind. I have had one lesson and that is enough."

"Very well," said Dick; "you may go."

"Thank you," said Mr. Slavins, and he lost no time in starting for his home.

To the Saunders family, who had witnessed the scene with wonder, Dick gave such explanation as he saw fit, being careful not to tell the real truth of the matter, for he knew that if the Saunders family should learn that their neighbor had furnished information to the British it would cause bad blood between them; and Dick had such a liking for and interest in George Saunders and Lucy Slavins that he would not willingly say or do anything to cause them trouble.

The members of Dick's force had just finished their dinner when one of the scouts who had been sent forward to keep watch for the approach of the British, came rushing in with the information that the redcoats were coming.

"To arms!" cried Dick. Then he asked: "How far away are the British?"

"About two miles," was the reply.

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "We will hasten forward about three-quarters of a mile and conceal ourselves in the edge of the timber and be ready to give the redcoats a warm reception."

A moment later he gave the order for his force to move forward upon the double-quick.

The men obeyed promptly and hastened down the road. George Saunders was with them, he having asked Dick to be allowed to go with them.

"I can shoot as good as any of you," he had said, "and would like a chance to plug a few redcoats."

Three-quarters of a mile from Mr. Saunders' home they found a splendid place for an ambush.

Concealing themselves among the bushes growing just within the edge of the timber bordering the road they awaited the approach of the enemy.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. Then the redcoats came into view around a bend in the road, a third of a mile distant. Onward they came. They were riding straight into a death-trap, yet were entirely unsuspicious of the fact.

They were to have a terrible awakening.

Closer and closer they came. Dick judged that there were about two hundred of the redcoats and all were mounted. He waited till about forty of the redcoats had passed and then suddenly gave the order:

"'Liberty Boys,' fire!"

A hundred musket muzzles belched forth flame and smoke.

A thunderous report rang out.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK RESCUES BOB.

The volley did deadly execution. Full two-score of the redcoats went down. Many horses were killed and wounded, also, and men and animals were mixed in almost inextricable confusion.

But this was not by any means to end the affair. Indeed, it was but the beginning—the prelude, as it were.

Again Dick's voice rang out:

"Regular soldiers, fire!"

The hundred veterans who had accompanied the "Liberty Boys" fired at Dick's command. Their volley did almost

as much damage as that of the youths had done. Nearly a score of horses and riders went down.

The redcoats were wild with terror. They had been taken entirely by surprise and they scarcely realized what it was that had struck them. It seemed to be raining leaden bullets from the roadside. It was a terrible scene. Those of the redcoats who had not been hit by the bullets rode wildly hither and thither, seemingly not knowing what to do.

Their commander, however, was a brave man. Drawing his sword he waved it in the air and cried out:

"Follow me, men! Charge the scoundrels!"

He started to ride toward the timber at the side of the road, and some of his men started to follow, but at this instant Dick again gave the order to fire.

The "Liberty Boys" had drawn their pistols, and, at the command, they poured in a volley upon the approaching redcoats.

This was too much. Those who were not shot down whirled their horses and dashed wildly away down the road. This was the signal for a general flight, and all who could do so raced down the road like mad. The soldiers of Dick's force fired a couple of volleys from their pistols, which had considerable effect in accelerating the speed of the fleeing redcoats.

Dick and his comrades were delighted. They had gained a great victory. They had killed and wounded at least fifty of the enemy and not one of their number had been injured. Indeed, the redcoats had not fired a shot.

Dick immediately gave orders that the wounded horses should be shot and the uninjured ones caught, which was quickly done.

Then the wounded redcoats were looked after. It was found that there were about twenty of them, thirty of the fifty who had gone down being dead.

The dead would have to be buried and the wounded would have to be taken care of, so Dick sent to the homes of Mr. Saunders and Mr. Slavins for wagons and spades. When these came a lot of the "Liberty Boys" were put to work digging graves. As soon as this work was finished the dead redcoats were buried, and then the wounded men were placed in the wagons, on straw placed in the bottom, and were taken to the two farmhouses, ten to each, where they were given the best possible attention.

Quite a large crowd of the neighbors were present when the wounded redcoats were brought to the houses, the majority of said neighbors being patriots.

The news of the encounter and the great victory of the patriots had quickly traveled through the neighborhood,

and, of course, the members of the Whig families were delighted. The Tories were not pleased, however, and they looked glum, indeed.

They did not like to hear of the terrible thrashing which the British had received at the hands of Dick Slater and his force of "Liberty Boys" and patriot soldiers.

Lucy and Tom Slavins were delighted, and they did not make them keep quiet about saying so. Their parents tried to make them keep quiet, but could not do it. Lucy, when she learned that George Saunders had fought with the "Liberty Boys," could not contain herself, and leaped into the arms of her lover and kissed him right before everybody.

"Oh, George, I am so glad you helped whip those redcoats!" she cried. "I am going to give you another kiss!" And she did.

The patriot soldiers, especially the "Liberty Boys," cheered the beautiful girl to the echo, and cried out that she was the best kind of girl—that she was true blue. This pleased Lucy, and she said that if she were a man she would be in the ranks, fighting for liberty.

Some of the Tory neighbors who were present were astonished and horrified, and stared at one another in amazement. They could not understand it. Had Martin Slavins turned "rebel," they asked themselves.

Presently Dick looked about him, in search of Bob, but could see his friend and comrade nowhere. He asked some of the "Liberty Boys" if they knew where Bob was, but they said they did not. Dick still had guards and scouts out, extending down the road a distance of two miles, and the youth decided that Bob must be on duty somewhere down the line.

Cautioning the soldiers to be ready for action at a moment's notice, Dick started in search of Bob. He wished to have a conference with the youth, who was the second in command.

Dick passed scout after scout, however, without finding Bob. He looked everywhere, and at last reached the extreme end of the line and still had not found his comrade. He did not know what to think. What had become of Bob? Had he been killed? Had he been captured by the redcoats?

Dick was worried. He loved Bob as a brother. They had been chums all their lives; they had lived neighbors, and had hunted, fished and swam together, had gone to school together. He must find what had become of Bob, and if he had been captured, must rescue him.

He could hardly wait till evening to start on the quest. He was confident that in some manner Bob had fallen

into the hands of the British, and he was determined to go and see if he could rescue his friend, just as soon as night came.

Dick thought it possible that the redcoats might attempt to make another attack that afternoon, but they did not. Evidently the terrible lesson they had received would last them more than an hour or so.

As soon as it was dark Dick set out. He reached the extreme end of the line of scouts and had a conversation with the youth there, who was Mark Morrison, one in whom Dick had great confidence. Mark had done some advance scouting that afternoon, and he told Dick that he thought the redcoats were encamped about a mile and a half in front, at a stone church and schoolhouse combined.

"They were there an hour before sundown, Dick," said Mark, in conclusion; "for I climbed a tree on a hill down yonder a ways and saw them."

"All right, Mark, I'm glad you did so, as now I shall know where to look for the enemy."

"Jove! I hope you'll find Bob and be able to rescue him, Dick."

"I hope so, too."

"Don't you think it would have been a good idea, Dick, to have taken your force and gone and made an attack?"

"I hardly think so, Mark. It would have been impossible to take them by surprise, and the result would have been that, while we should, no doubt, have been able to kill a good many of them, they would have done the same for us, and I don't want to sacrifice any more lives than is absolutely necessary."

"Of course not; but I don't see how you are going to rescue Bob, alone and unaided."

"I don't exactly see how it is to be done, myself, Mark, but I'm going to make the trial."

"Well, good-by and good luck to you."

The two shook hands and Dick made his way up the road at a rapid walk. When he reached the top of the hill Mark had mentioned he stopped and looked ahead. Far in the distance he saw the glimmer of camp-fires.

"Mark was right," Dick murmured; "there is the encampment, sure enough. Good! I am glad it is not far away."

The youth strode onward, down the road. He knew exactly where the old stone church and schoolhouse stood. He had passed it a number of times when going to and from Philadelphia. He remembered that heavy timber grew right up to the back of the building, and, making a wide detour, he approached it from that direction.

As he drew near the church he was glad to see that the main force of the redcoats was encamped on the opposite side of the road, in the edge of the timber. They had camped there in order to be sheltered from the wind which was blowing quite strong from the north.

The day had been quite warm for the time of year, and practically all the snow had been melted, leaving the ground black and bare. This was in Dick's favor as it made the night darker than it would have been had the snow been on the ground.

Dick stole close up to the rear of the church. There was a door near the corner, being there for convenience in getting wood into the building. At this door stood a redcoat. It happened that his back was toward Dick and the youth took advantage of the opportunity thus presented.

He stole quickly forward and when within reach of the redcoat, dealt him a blow with the butt of a pistol. The sentinel sank to the ground, unconscious.

"So much for that," said Dick to himself; "now to see if the door is locked."

Dick tried the door and to his joy found that it was not locked or barred. He pushed the door slowly and gently open and looked into the room. It was pretty well filled with redcoats, the majority of whom were stretched out on the seats and on the floor, sound asleep. A roaring fire was burning in the huge fire-place and in a semi-circle in front of this, with their feet to the fire, lay a number, among them several officers.

Feeling sure that all the redcoats were asleep, Dick stepped into the room. As he did so his eyes fell upon a prisoner sitting in the opposite corner.

Dick's heart gave a great throb of delight.

The prisoner was Bob!

Bob was wideawake and he saw and recognized Dick. There was no light in the building save that made by the fire, but this was sufficient.

Dick lost no time, but stole softly across the room. He even stepped over one or two sleeping redcoats, but so light were his footfalls that they were almost inaudible, even to one who might be listening for them. The sleepers would not have heard them had they been much louder.

Dick reached Bob's side and quickly cut his bonds. Then the two stole softly back toward the door.

Dick's eyes were attracted by a stack of muskets. He eyed the weapons, longingly. Such weapons were sadly needed and he thought what a stroke it would be if they could take the muskets away with them. He decided to make the attempt. He communicated his intentions to Bob, in a cautious whisper, and then when the latter had

passed through the doorway Dick handed the muskets, one at a time, out to him. There were about twenty of the weapons. There were several other stacks in the room, but they were at a distance from the door and the youth did not dare try to secure them.

Stepping through the doorway he pulled the door gently to.

The redcoat whom Dick had knocked senseless still lay where he had fallen, but he was beginning to stir, so the youths bound and gagged him.

"You stay here, Bob," said Dick, "and I will go and get a couple of horses; I know where they are and feel confident that I can secure a couple of them."

"All right, Dick," said Bob; "be careful, however. Don't let the redcoats capture you, now, after having rescued me."

"I'll try not to."

Dick entered the timber just behind them, and making a circuit he crossed the road a couple of hundred yards to the eastward of the church and made his way to where the redcoats' horses were.

There was a sentinel on guard over the horses, of course, but Dick managed to steal up close to him without being discovered and struck him over the head with the butt of a pistol. The redcoat dropped in his tracks, knocked senseless by the terrible blow.

"So far, so good," thought Dick; "now to secure a couple of the horses."

This did not take him long. He picked out two, and after saddling and bridling them, led them away through the timber.

He made the circuit as before, and five minutes later reached the spot where Bob was awaiting him.

The youths now went to work and tied the muskets to the horns of the saddles. They had just finished this work when they were startled by loud yells from the redcoats' encampment across the road. Dick knew what it meant. The sentinel whom he had knocked senseless had regained consciousness and given the alarm.

"We must take refuge in flight, Bob!" exclaimed Dick. "Our only chance is in making a bold dash for liberty."

"Away we go, old man!" cried Bob.

They leaped upon the horses at a single bound, and with the arms tied on the saddles, Dick and Bob dashed down the road. A redcoat darted at Dick, sword in hand, but the youth stopped him with a pistol ball.

The redcoat encampment was now in an uproar. A number of the British soldiers dashed forward and fired a volley. None of the bullets took effect, however; the

youths had succeeded in getting away, but it was a very narrow escape.

Onward they dashed, up the road.

The redcoats mounted as quickly as possible and gave pursuit, but were unable to gain on the fugitives and soon gave it up and returned to their encampment.

Dick and Bob, as soon as they learned that they were no longer pursued, slowed their horses down to an ordinary gallop.

Half a mile farther on they were challenged. The challenger was Mark Morrison, and when he found that Dick had succeeded in rescuing Bob, his delight knew no bounds.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Dick, it takes you to do things!"

After a few more words of conversation, the youths made their way onward, and twenty minutes later reached the Saunders home.

Some of the "Liberty Boys" were still awake and the cheer which they gave utterance to when they saw Bob back again, safe and sound, in company with Dick, roused all the others. They crowded about the two youths, eager to hear the story of what had happened to Bob. When they learned how Dick had rescued Bob and how the two had secured two of the redcoats' horses and twenty of their muskets, they were wild with delight and gave three cheers for Dick Slater.

This done, they again rolled themselves up in their blankets, beside the fires, and went to sleep.

George Saunders, who was still up, made Dick and Bob come into the house.

"We have a spare room," he said, "and you may as well occupy it as not."

The two accepted the invitation with thanks and were soon in bed and asleep.

It seemed to them as if they had scarcely more than touched the bed before they were aroused by a rapping on their door.

"Wake up, Dick, Bob!" cried the voice of Sam Sander-son, one of the "Liberty Boys." "Mark Morrison has just come in with the report that the redcoats are coming to attack us!"

CHAPTER X.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LUCY.

Dick and Bob were out of bed in a jiffy.

"We'll be out in just a minute, Sam," called out Dick. "Tell the boys to get ready."

The youths dressed as quickly as possible and a few minutes later were out of doors.

Dick asked Mark for the particulars and was speedily placed in possession of them. According to Mark's statement the redcoats were only about a mile away and were approaching as rapidly as they could and yet not make much noise. It was evident that they were counting on taking the patriots by surprise.

Dick led his force down the road a distance of perhaps two hundred yards, and the men took up a position behind a rail fence which extended alongside the road and just within the edge of the timber.

Dick gave such instructions as he thought necessary and then all awaited the coming of the enemy.

They did not have long to wait. Soon the hoofbeats of the redcoats' horses was heard. Louder and louder the sound grew. Soon the redcoats would be in sight.

Although it had seemed to Dick and Bob as if they had not slept five minutes, yet they had slept more than that many hours, and now the first faint light of the coming day could be seen in the east.

It was light enough so that a large body like the party of redcoats could be seen at a distance of fifty yards, and presently the enemy came in sight.

Closer and closer the redcoats came. They were proceeding cautiously and it was evidently their intention to move slowly until challenged by the "rebel" sentinel, and then make a sudden dash and ride right into the camp and cut the patriot soldiers down.

If such was their expectation they were destined to be badly disappointed, and suddenly they were startled by hearing a clear, ringing voice cry out:

"Liberty Boys' fire!"

Crash! Roar! The youths had obeyed the command, and poured a withering volley into the ranks of the redcoats.

It came as a surprise, and a terrible one to the British. They had come with the intention of surprising the patriots and had had the tables turned on them.

It was not yet light enough so that the youths could take good aim, so the volley did not do as much execution as it might otherwise have done. A dozen horses and their riders went down, however, and the scene immediately became a bedlam.

The redcoats yelled and cursed, and their officers tried to keep them from becoming demoralized. In the midst of this came a second volley, and again a number of saddles were emptied and several horses went down.

Maddened by the reception which had been accorded

them, the redcoats charged toward the rail fence, but were met with two withering volleys in quick succession and recoiled. They could not face such a hail of bullets.

The officers kept on trying to keep their men from taking to flight, and succeeded better than might have been expected.

"They have fired off all their weapons!" shouted the commander of the force. "Charge them before they have time to reload!"

This was good advice, and had the redcoats obeyed immediately there would have been a terrible hand-to-hand encounter there by the rail fence. The men did not obey promptly, however, but were so demoralized it took them several minutes to get straightened out, and by that time the patriots had succeeded in reloading their muskets. Then, when the British rode forward, they were met with two volleys, which, fired right into their faces at a distance of only ten feet, were something terrible, and the next instant the entire force was dashing away, down the road, in great disorder. It was a case of every fellow for himself, and Old Nick take the hindmost.

Again Dick's little army had triumphed. The redcoats were completely routed, and at least thirty of their number lay on the ground, dead or wounded.

Fearing that the enemy might return, Dick ordered the men to load their muskets and pistols as quickly as possible, which they did; but the redcoats did not come back. They had plenty for that time.

When convinced that the trouble was over for the time being, Dick ordered that the wounded redcoats should be taken to the farmhouse and made as comfortable as possible. This was done, and then the wounded horses were shot and put out of their misery, and the uninjured ones were caught and taken and placed in Mr. Saunders' stable.

It was now coming daylight, and Dick did not think the redcoats would again attempt to make an attack, but he would not take anything for granted, and threw out a strong scouting force in the direction the enemy had gone.

While they were at breakfast, Dick and Bob having been invited to eat at the table in the Saunders house, the youths received word that the British had taken their departure and were riding toward the east.

"They are going back to Philadelphia to report their failure to accomplish their purpose here," said Dick, confidently.

The others were of a like opinion, and when the soldiers outside were informed of the fact that the enemy had

given up and was going back, they gave utterance to cheer after cheer.

"We licked 'em!" cried Sam Sanderson. "Hurrah! We licked 'em, and we can do it again if they will only give us the chance!"

"That we can!" was the cry from the rest of the "Liberty Boys."

Mary Saunders and ten-year-old Fred were greatly excited, and were delighted by the victories of the patriots.

They were greatly taken with the "Liberty Boys," and Fred had more than once expressed the wish that he was old enough to join the company.

"Goodness! I feel just like giving that boy a kiss!" cried Mary, when Sam cried out that they had "licked" the redcoats and could do it again. The youth heard what Mary said, and running to where she stood, gave her a resounding smack.

"There!" he said, "that was the sweetest kiss I ever had, and if I was sure I would receive one like it every time I fought the redcoats I wouldn't give them any rest, but would be after 'em all the time. I really believe that I could exterminate the entire British army!"

"If I thought you could do that I would furnish you the necessary number of kisses!" cried the merry girl, and then the "Liberty Boys" cheered her.

"But we wouldn't let Sam have all the work to himself!" one cried. "We would want to be in on that deal, too!"

Mrs. Saunders had come out of the house just in time to see Sam kiss her daughter, and she exclaimed:

"Why, Mary, how could you!" in a shocked tone of voice.

"Oh, I couldn't help it, mother!" laughed the girl, "I was so glad that these brave boys and men whipped the British that I just had to kiss somebody!"

"I'm awfully glad that I happened to be the lucky one," said Sam, with a grin.

Dick dispatched a score of the youths with instructions to bury the dead redcoats, and just as they left Mr. and Mrs. Slavins came hurrying up. Both looked excited, and as they came to a stop in front of Mrs. Saunders and Mary, cried out, in unison:

"Is Lucy over here?"

"Why, no," replied Mrs. Saunders.

"Hasn't she been over here this morning?" asked Mrs. Slavins.

"No; I am quite sure she hasn't. At any rate, I haven't seen her. Have you, Mary?"

Mary shook her head.

"No," she replied; "and if Lucy had come over we should have seen her, of course."

A groan escaped Mr. and Mrs. Slavins, in unison.

"Then where can she be?" they cried.

"Where can who be?" asked George Saunders, who had just appeared and heard the last words spoken.

"Why, Lucy," replied Mrs. Slavins, in a trembling voice. "She is missing!"

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BECAME OF LUCY?

"What!" exclaimed George, turning pale. "You don't mean it!"

"Yes, yes!" cried Mrs. Slavins, wildly. "Lucy is missing! We have not seen her since last night when she left the room to go to bed."

George was almost wild. He asked a number of questions, and it was learned that Lucy's bed had not been slept in. This was very strange, and no one could understand the puzzle.

"She would not go away to a neighbor's without saying anything to you, would she?" asked George.

"No," was the reply; "and if she had gone to a neighbor's house, it would have been yours. She hardly ever goes anywhere else."

Considerable interest was manifested by all who heard the conversation. The majority had seen Lucy and remembered what a beautiful girl she was; and they had learned, too, that she was the affianced of George Saunders, and as George had fought with them, and Mr. and Mrs. Saunders had been so kind to them, they felt great sympathy for George and were ready to do anything to help him in his trouble.

Some suggested that a search be made at once, and Dick ordered that this be done. Squads were sent out in all directions, with instructions to search thoroughly, and to inquire at the home of every neighbor if they had seen anything of Lucy.

Soon the "Liberty Boys" and other soldiers were searching high and low for the missing girl. The news that she was missing soon became known, far and wide, and all neighbors turned out to assist in the search, which was kept up till noon. Then as one after another the searching parties came in, each and every one reporting that no signs of the girl could be found, the hearts of George Saunders

and the parents of Lucy sank. They began to fear that they would never see her again.

They could not even give a guess regarding what had happened to her, and this made the affair all the more trying. Had they had a clue they would not have felt quite so bad, for they would have had something to think about and work upon.

And now, with the privilege of the writer, we will see what had become of Lucy.

As her mother had said, at late bedtime the night before she had taken her candle and started to go to her bedroom. She occupied a room upstairs and well back along the hall, toward the rear of the house. She reached her door, opened it and stepped into the room, to find herself seized by strong hands. The candle was blown out before she had a chance to see who her assailants were, and then a blanket was thrown over her head, and although she cried out her voice was so muffled that she was not heard.

Her captors then carried her to the window at the end of the hall and lifted her through and out onto the shed roof. There were four men, and the girl was no more than a babe in their hands. They had no difficulty in getting Lucy down to the ground, there being a ladder leaning against the roof at the lower edge, and then the four carried the girl to where four horses were hitched, a hundred yards up the road.

One of the three untied a horse, leaped into the saddle, and the other three men lifted the girl up to him. Lucy was now unconscious, the enveloping folds of the heavy blanket having almost suffocated her.

The other three men then untied their horses, mounted, and the four rode away, up the road toward the west. They went only half a mile in this direction and then turned south and went in this direction a mile. Then they turned east and rode in this direction a distance of three miles. Here they made another turn to the left, and a ride of a mile brought them to the main road, leading eastward to Philadelphia.

The four had not indulged in much conversation up to this time, speaking only at rare intervals, and then in brief monosyllables; but now one of the men drew a breath of relief and said:

"I guess we are safe now, cap."

"Yes, I think so," was the reply. "I haven't worried much about being pursued, however, for I doubt if they will discover that the girl is missing before morning."

"And in that case we will be clear out of their reach, you know."

"Yes, so we will. Aren't you tired, cap? Let me have the girl a while."

"All right." Then a stop was made and the girl was transferred from the arms of the man called "cap" to those of another of the kidnappers.

It will be as well to acknowledge, now, that the men who had abducted Lucy Slavins were Captain Sherwood and his three crony comrades. The captain had not, by any means, accepted his refusal at the girl's hands as final, and he had made up his mind to have her by foul means, since fair ones had failed.

Lucy was conscious, now, Captain Sherwood having opened the blanket in such a way as to let in fresh air, but she did not let on that such was the case, but lay silent as if still unconscious. She had long since recognized who her captors were, by their voices, and her heart was bitter against the scoundrelly captain for what he had done.

"I wonder if he thinks this will make me love him?" thought Lucy. "I wonder what he thinks of American girls, anyway? He must have a queer opinion of them."

On, on rode the redecoats. They took turns at holding Lucy, and the girl took a malicious delight in worrying them by pretending to be unconscious. They talked of the matter and Lucy could tell by his tones that the captain was frightened for fear she was dead, or at least might never regain consciousness.

The redecoats rode as rapidly as they could, and at last reached the old cabin in the woods about a mile and a half from Philadelphia, where, as the reader will remember, Dick had overheard the four talking on the night he had left his horse tied in the old stable.

"Thank goodness, we have got here at last!" exclaimed Captain Sherwood, as he leaped to the ground. "Jerry, you take the girl and carry her into the house. Tom, you and Sam put the horses in the stable. I'll open the door and let you in the house, Jerry."

The captain passed Jerry, in whose arms the fellow called "Tom" had just placed Lucy, and made his way to the door of the cabin, which he opened. Jerry was close behind, and entered and deposited the supposed unconscious girl on a sort of rude cot at one side of the room.

"Now build up the fire, Jerry," ordered the captain, as he closed the door. "I will see whether or not the girl is alive."

Captain Sherwood turned and started toward the cot, but Lucy quickly rose to a sitting posture, and, throwing

"Aha! so you have regained consciousness, eh?" exclaimed Captain Sherwood, a look of relief appearing on his face.

"As you see, sir," replied Lucy, with cold dignity; "and now, if you will be so kind; I would like for you to tell me what you mean by making a prisoner of me and carrying me away from my home in this fashion?"

The officer was not at all disconcerted.

"That is simple enough, and easily answered," he replied; "I have done it because I love you."

A scornful smile appeared on Lucy's face.

"You have a peculiar way of showing your love, I must say!" she said.

"You must not be hard on me, Lucy," said the captain; "you refused me and as I was determined that I would make you my wife, how else could I act? I think this is very conclusive proof that I love you when I take the trouble that I have to secure you."

"Don't call me Lucy," said the girl, her eyes flashing; "you have no right to do so. And you have made a great mistake in bringing me here, for I shall never consent to marry you—never!"

A cunning smile appeared on the face of the captain.

"That is all right," he said; "we will fix that. If you will marry me willingly, well and good; it will be the best thing you can do, and will simplify matters; but if you won't do that why then you will have to marry me whether you wish to or not, for I have a comrade who is a regularly-ordained minister, and he can perform the ceremony—and will do it if I tell him to, whether you are willing or not!"

Lucy turned pale.

"You—scoundrel!" she cried. "You would not dare!"

"I dare anything. I have made up my mind to have you for my wife, and I am going to do so and nothing can prevent me."

"Don't be too sure," warned the girl; "one thing is certain, I would rather die than be made your wife, and then, George will find and rescue me—I know it."

"Bah!" sneered Sherwood. "George will never know what has become of you. We did our work well, and our friends will not have the least idea where to look for you. Don't buoy yourself up with any such hopes, for you will be disappointed."

"I don't believe it," was the brave reply; "George will find and rescue me and punish you as you deserve to be punished for such dastardly work."

Captain Sherwood laughed scornfully.

"If that lover of yours ever comes within reach of my

sword I will spit him as I would a frog!" he said, boastfully. "I would ask no better sport than to be pitted against a dozen or two of country bumpkins such as he."

"If you were as good a fighter as you are boaster you would indeed be dangerous," was the girl's reply, cuttingly given.

The captain flushed. It was evident that he did not relish such talk from one whom he fancied he loved.

"It is a good thing you are a woman," he growled; "no man would dare talk thus to me!"

"Oh, dear me, is that so?" said Lucy, mockingly.

The two soldiers entered at this moment and the captain turned away without answering Lucy. He called the two aside and held a whispered conversation with them, and they nodded and went out.

Captain Sherwood barred the door and then asked Lucy if she wished to get some sleep. She replied that she did, and the officer opened a door at the end of the room, revealing another room, smaller in size.

"You will find a comfortable bunk in there," he said; "there are plenty of warm blankets, and if you need more, let me know."

He handed the girl a candle, which she took, and, without a word, entered the room and closed the door.

"You'll have hard work taming her, cap," said Jerry, when the captain came and sat down beside him at the fire.

"I judge you are right, Jerry," replied the captain, a dark frown on his face; "I will tame her, though, or know the reason why."

There was a look in the British officer's eyes which showed that he meant what he said. It was a look which proved him to be a man capable of anything.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RESCUE.

As we have seen, the disappearance of Lucy Slavins had caused general consternation and alarm among her relatives and friends.

Search had been made for her, but till noon of the day following her disappearance no signs of the missing girl had been found.

Lucy's parents were almost distracted and so was George Saunders. His face was pale and drawn and he looked like a man forty years old. Dick felt very sorry for the young man. He realized that the blow was indeed a severe one.

"I wish I could say or do something to comfort him," thought Dick; and then like a flash an idea came to him. He remembered how Captain Sherwood had looked at Lucy the night of the storm, when he and his three men had stopped at Mr. Slavins', and he remembered, also, the conversation which he had heard between the captain and his men in the old cabin in the timber close to Philadelphia. Might it not be possible that the British officer had carried Lucy away? Dick thought such a thing not only possible, but probable, and calling George Saunders aside he told the young man his suspicions.

George became greatly excited at once.

"That is it!" he cried. "You have hit upon the truth, Dick, I'll wager; for Lucy told me that Captain Sherwood made love to her and asked her to be his wife, and that when she told him it was impossible, he threatened her. Why didn't I think of it myself? The scoundrel! Oh, just let me get my hands on him!"

George was terribly in earnest, and it was plain to be seen that there would be trouble when he and the gallant captain met. Then a gloomy look settled over his face as he said:

"But where will we look for Lucy, Dick? Where do you suppose he has taken her?"

"To the old cabin, of course," was the reply; "I will wager that we find her there."

"Of course," agreed George; "my head is all muddled, Dick, and I can't think clearly. But let's be going! I shall be wild till I see Lucy again and learn that she is safe!"

"Very well; we will start at once, George," said Dick, who understood and appreciated the young man's feelings in the matter. "I will take a dozen of my 'Liberty Boys' and we will ride at the best speed at which our horses can travel. We should be able to reach the cabin by three o'clock, or half-past at the outside."

"So we should. Get your men, Dick, and I will join you over at our house. I have a three-year-old over there that can outrun any horse in this part of the country, and I'll give him something to do to-day."

"All right, George."

The young man hastened away in the direction of his home, and Dick picked out ten of the "Liberty Boys" and told them to get ready to accompany him. Eleven of the horses that had been captured from the redcoats were hastily bridled and saddled, and when Mr. and Mrs. Slavins asked Dick if he had a clew, he told them that he thought he had. They asked him to tell them what the clew was and he told them what he suspected. Mrs.

Slavins was impressed with the idea that the secret of Lucy's disappearance had been solved, for she said that Lucy had told her that the captain had made love to her, and asked her to be his wife, and that he had threatened when she had told him that she could not marry him. Mr. Slavins was not so sure. He could hardly bring himself to believe that a soldier of the king could do such a thing.

"But if it turns out that he has," he said, in a cold, hard voice, "if your suspicion proves to be correct, and Captain Sherwood has stolen my daughter and carried her off, then I shall no longer be an adherent of the king. I shall not feel that I am called upon to be loyal to a sovereign who has in his employ such scoundrels! From that time on I shall be a patriot!"

"Good for you!" exclaimed Dick, approvingly. "Stick to that and I think that before this time to-morrow the great cause of Liberty will have one more adherent."

The eleven youths mounted their horses and rode away at a gallop, followed by the cheers of all, for the news of where they were going and why, had traveled from mouth to mouth, and there was great excitement.

At the Saunders home George joined the youths and then the party of twelve dashed down the road like a cyclone.

They rode like the wind for three hours and then Dick gave the word for them to slacken speed. They obeyed, and a few rods farther on the youth turned aside and led the way into the timber. It was quickly seen that he was following what had once been a road, but which was now hardly recognizable as such, it being almost choked up with underbrush.

The members of the party rode along in single file, and presently came out in a little clearing. At the farther side of the clearing was an old cabin, and just as the youths appeared a man stepped out of the doorway and pulled the door shut behind him. The man was Captain Sherwood, and Dick and George recognized him on the instant.

The officer heard the sound of the horses' hoofs, and looked up. A curse escaped his lips and he attempted to flee. He was too late, however; George would not have it. He was not willing to let the fellow escape. Spurring his horse forward he cried out:

"Villain! what have you done with Lucy?"

Sherwood, seeing that he would be unable to escape, drew his pistol and tried to shoot George, but the young man was too quick for him. George had drawn his pistol as he rode forward, and up went his hand, quick as a

flash, as he saw the other was about to fire. Two shots sounded almost together, but the bullet from the young patriot's pistol struck the redcoat in the chest and ruined his aim, his bullet going wild.

Sherwood sank to the ground with a groan.

"Curse you, you've killed me!" he hissed, vicious even though mortally wounded.

"And served you only right, you cowardly scoundrel!" cried George, who was very angry and as yet uncertain regarding the fate of his loved one. "Where is Lucy?"

He leaped to the ground as he spoke and started toward the door of the cabin, which opened suddenly, showing a redcoat, who raised his hands and cried:

"I surrender. Don't shoot!"

"Where is Lucy?" cried George, threateningly, covering the fellow with his other pistol. "Where is that poor girl whom you stole away from her home last night? Answer!"

The look on the young man's face was so menacing, so terrible, indeed, that the redcoat hastened to reply:

"She's in here, safe and sound," he cried; "don't shoot!"

George caught hold of the redcoat, and, jerking him out of the doorway, hurled him into the arms of the "Liberty Boys," who had dismounted and dashed into the cabin.

"Lucy!" he cried. "Lucy, where are you?"

Instantly there was a joyous cry and Lucy—who had heard the firing, and not knowing what was going on, had kept back in the cabin out of the way—leaped forward and was clasped in her lover's arms.

"Oh, George!" she murmured, kissing him again and again, and then permitting him to give them all back again. "I knew you would come. I told Captain Sherwood you would rescue me, and make him pay a heavy penalty for what he had done!"

"He has done so, Lucy; he is outside, dying."

"Did you shoot him, George?"

"Yes, Lucy; we both fired at almost the same instant, but I beat him by the fraction of a second, and his shot did not damage me in the least."

"Oh, I am so glad that you escaped—but I'm sorry you gave him his death-wound, George. Bring him into the cabin and place him on the cot; perhaps we may be able to do something to ease his pain."

That was the woman of it. A few moments before the girl was filled with anger and hatred toward the British officer, but now all the bitterness had gone out and she was ready to be a ministering angel.

The "Liberty Boys" had already made a prisoner of

Jerry and now, at George's request, four of them carried the wounded man into the house and placed him on the cot. They did all they could for him, but the experienced eyes of the "Liberty Boys" told them that it was useless. Captain Sherwood himself knew it.

"It's no use," he said, feebly; "I have received my death-wound." Then he turned his eyes upon Lucy.

"Can you—forgive—me?" he said, gaspingly. "I know that I—did wrong; and I—am sorry. I hope you—won't think—too hard of me, for—I—loved you!"

These were the last words ever spoken by Captain Sherwood. As he finished speaking, he gave a shudder and was dead.

The scene affected Lucy greatly and laying her head on George's shoulder, she wept.

"Why, Lucy, what is the matter?" asked George.

"Nothing, George," was the reply; "only—I'm so sorry—he may have parents who will grieve for him."

"He ought to have thought of that and been a better man," said George, philosophically.

Dick realized that it was dangerous to remain where they were for any length of time. They were within a mile and a half of Philadelphia, and a band of redcoats might come down upon them at any moment. He questioned Jerry.

"There were two more of you," he said; "where are they now?"

"In Philadelphia," replied Jerry.

"Will they be back soon?"

"Yes; they'll be back this evening."

"Good! Then I shall leave you here, Jerry, and when your comrades come they will release you and the three of you can look after the dead body of your captain."

Jerry nodded and drew a breath of relief. It was evident that he was glad to know that he was not to be taken along with Dick's party.

The horses belonging to Jerry and Captain Sherwood were found in the stable and the captain's horse was taken for Lucy's use.

Ten minutes later the entire party was riding away on the road leading westward from Philadelphia.

They rode steadily onward for three hours, at the end of which time they arrived at Lucy's home.

The scene which ensued when Lucy arrived in safety was an exciting one, for the "Liberty Boys" and soldiers in general cheered loudly.

The meeting between mother and daughter was very touching and Mrs. Slavins wept for joy as she folded her daughter to her heart.

Mr. Slavins gave his daughter a kiss and then strode up to Dick.

"Then it is true that Lucy was kidnapped by that scoundrel, Sherwood?" he asked.

"Yes, it is true," replied Dick.

An exclamation of anger escaped Mr. Slavins.

"That settles it, then!" he cried. "I am no longer a king's man, but from this day forth will be a patriot to the core!" Then lifting his voice he cried:

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

All present had heard how Mr. Slavins had said that he would renounce allegiance to the king and become a patriot if it turned out that the redcoats had kidnapped his daughter, and when they heard him cry out, "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" a cheer went up from all.

"Hurrah for Mr. Slavins!" yelled Sam Sanderson. "Three cheers for the patriot, boys!"

The cheers were given with a will, and then everybody present insisted on shaking hands with Mr. Slavins.

Next morning Dick asked Mr. Slavins how he felt. "Are you sorry that you have become a patriot?" he inquired.

"Sorry? No!" was the emphatic reply. "I am glad. I am only sorry that I did not become a patriot sooner."

The work of the "Liberty Boys" in this vicinity was over. They had spoiled the plans of the redcoats and Dick did not think they would try to bother the patriots of that vicinity soon again. Feeling sure of this, Dick and his men bade good-by to all the members of the Slavins

and Saunders families and rode away in the direction of Valley Forge.

When Dick made his report to General Washington, he was praised for his good work, and felt that he was amply repaid, as praise was something never idly bestowed by the commander-in-chief.

A few days later Sam Sanderson, who had made a visit to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Saunders—of course, Mary had nothing to do with his going there!—returned with the report that the British had come and taken their wounded soldiers away from the homes of Mr. Saunders and Mr. Slavins, and that all was quiet in the neighborhood.

We may as well state here that George Saunders and Lucy Slavins were married at the close of the war, and that Dick Slater was present at the ceremony, the most honored guest of the occasion.

THE END.

The next number (55) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' STRATEGY; OR, OUTGENERALING THE ENEMY," by Harry Moore.

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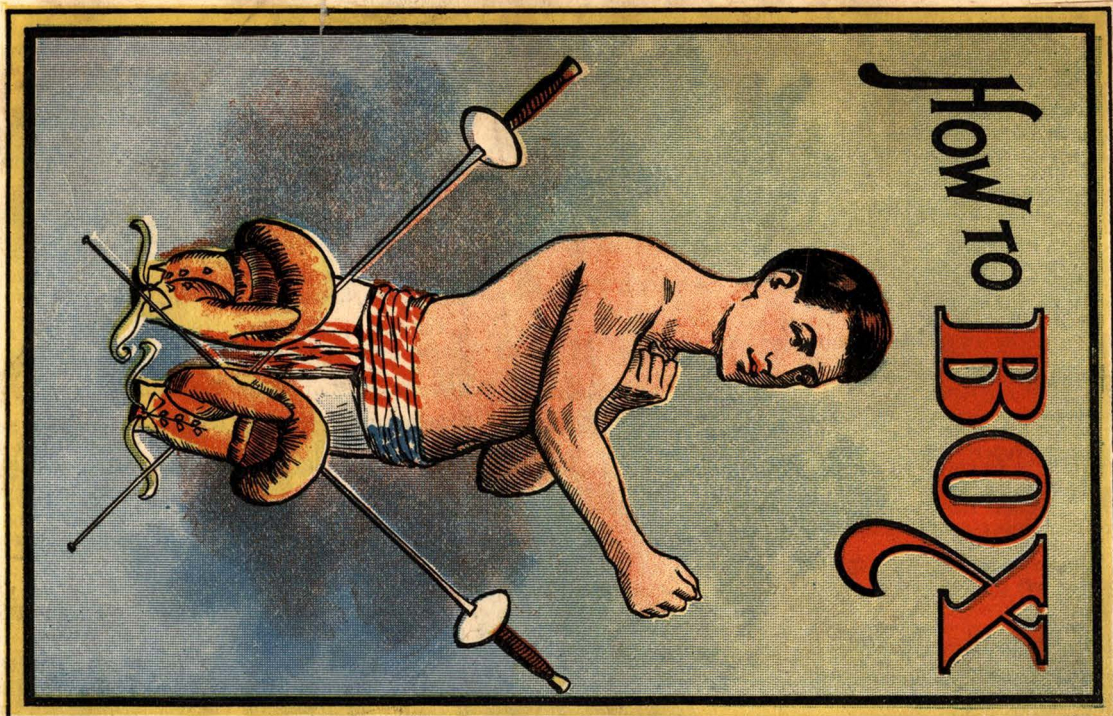
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